



# Newsletter Friends of St Kilda Cemetery Inc

January 2019

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Happy New Year and Welcome to the January 2019 newsletter and hope everyone is enjoying a pleasant summer vacation

## Volunteers needed...

**COME AND HELP THE FRIENDS BE A WONDERFUL HISTORICAL GROUP.**



## Printing of newsletter



Printed copies of our newsletters are provided courtesy of SCOTSBURN NURSERIES

[www.scotsburn.biz](http://www.scotsburn.biz)

The Friends thank Scotsburn. Their kind assistance is most appreciated.

Contributions to our newsletter are welcomed. Email for further information to [info@foskc.org](mailto:info@foskc.org)

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## Featured Article

**We thank Dr Andrew J Kilsby for the following article on Octavius Skinner Burton, buried St Kilda Cemetery CE C 2A**

### **Abstract:**

In 1939 a brief biography of Octavius Skinner Burton, cavalryman and Victorian Police inspector, appeared in the Victorian Historical Journal. Burton had served in the Austro-Hungarian War prior to joining the Victorian Police. He diverted from police work at Bendigo into the Volunteer cavalry as a staff officer. Made redundant a decade later, Burton managed to return to the Victorian Police, eventually winning his own district in Geelong. Neither especially flamboyant or distinguished, nonetheless Burton gave 27 years of devoted service to the colony during some of its most interesting times. This is an abridged article provides a modern retrospective on this most interesting colonial Victorian.

### **Octavius Skinner Burton (1823-1895) Cavalry Staff Officer and Police Inspector**

Quintessential cavalryman and Victorian Police Inspector Octavius Skinner Burton was christened in Beaumaris, Wales in September 1823, the eighth (hence Octavius) of ten children. Burton was a descendent of well-connected and established families with Irish antecedents. Little is known of Burton's formative years - he may well have attended a school in Winchester.

When he was 25 his credentials were sufficient for him to be accepted into the Austrian Army as a cadet. Burton followed a well-established tradition of British and Irish men of good families to enter the service of the Austrian Army. It was here that he received his first training as a cavalryman, and on the hardest training field of all – the battlefield – during the Austro-Hungarian war over 1848-49. He served in the infantry and then with two famous regiments, the Walmoden Curassiers and the Radetsky Hussars. Burton was present at the bombardment of Vienna in 1848 and was in 23 pitched battles including celebrated charges of Babolna and Moor; the latter charges both recorded in a classic book of cavalry tactics:

Burton was in the thick of it. Family lore offered that Burton suffered from frost bite sustained following injury on the battle field. However by 1850 he was home and wondering what to do next. At about this time, the new Victorian Government, faced with a burgeoning population and the desertion of many of its policemen, both courtesy of the discovery of gold in the colony, advertised for policemen in England. Governor La Trobe formed a special corps of police cadets in late 1852 to help overcome a growing law and order problem, both in Melbourne and the countryside.



Octavius Skinner Burton  
(1823-1895)

Cavalry Staff Officer and  
Police Inspector

"[Burton] although a  
strict disciplinarian, was  
of a genial, kindly  
temperament..."

Just as British and Irish officers in the Austrian Army was a well-established route for younger sons, so was a well-travelled path to the Australian colonies to serve as police officers (Robert O'Hara Burke, had also been an Irish officer with the Austrian Hussars before becoming a policeman in Victoria in 1853). The young veteran Burton, responded to the call and emigrated for Victoria, arriving in Port Philip on the *Sir Henry Hardinge* on 19 July 1853. No sooner had he arrived than he was appointed as a Police Inspector by the Governor of Victoria at a salary of £300 a year - Burton's appointment as Lieutenant was dated 9 August 1853.

He was assigned to the goldfields around Bendigo. The first reference in *The Argus* to Lieutenant (as the police sub-inspectors were then called) Burton is in July 1854 when he arrests a drunk. In early 1856 Burton is still in the Bendigo district, receiving a visit in his Epsom quarters by Catherine Hayes, the Irish balladeer and operatic singer, who was touring 'the wonders of Bendigo'. He presented her with 'emu and other skins'. By contrast, two weeks later he is breaking up a 'general scrimmage' initiated by Chinese miners at Eaglehawk.

In late 1856 Burton is found in charge of mounted drill at the Victoria Police depot at Richmond, where he was known as 'Dandy' Burton. He is also recorded in September 1856 as 'Inspector Burton' in a court case in Melbourne. Burton re-appears in June 1857 when he is listed among the hundreds of official guests invited to attend the Governor's levee at the Exhibition Building on the anniversary of Queen Victoria's ascension to the throne.

The Victorian Yeomanry Corps had been formed in October 1855 with 73 Volunteers. On 31 July 1857, Burton formally transferred to the Volunteer Force as a paid staff officer. His appointment as Captain and Adjutant of the corps followed in September 1857, with the appointment back-dated to 1 January of that year. As the full-time Adjutant and Captain in his cavalry unit, Burton's salary was now substantial at £450 p.a.; it was to remain unchanged until 1867. He now had the means to marry, on 16 June 1858 at St. Peter's Church. His bride was Esther Hull, daughter of William Hull, a retired wine merchant from Somerset who later became a MLC in the Victorian Parliament from 1860-1866. The Burtons moved into a house next to and possibly owned by, Esther's father, at 75 Bridge Road, Richmond between Punt Road and Lennox Street.

Burton became a central figure in the Volunteer cavalry forces for the next decade. In October 1860, Burton resigned from his position as Adjutant due to a re-organisation of his Corps. On 12 January 1861 Burton was appointed Captain and Adjutant of the 1<sup>st</sup>, or Royal, Victorian Volunteer Cavalry, or, as it became better known, the Prince of Wales Light Horse and his official station became Geelong. In this capacity he travelled to places such as Schnapper Point, Dandenong, Kyneton, Heidelberg, Ballarat and Castlemaine – and of course Melbourne - to drill and enrol



The Burton Family Grave,  
St Kilda Cemetery, CE C  
2A

Photo: R Douglas

cavalrymen. He commanded escorts for official parties and occasions, attended the inevitable levees and balls, oversaw manoeuvres at the Easter camps and reviews of Volunteers, acted as range superintendent at matches of the Victorian Rifle Association, and served on the Committees of the Volunteer Sword and Fencing Club and the Melbourne Anglers' Club.

In May 1865, he was appointed as Cavalry Staff Officer of the Local Force of Volunteers. Over these years the Burton family grew – from their first child in 1864 to eight children by 1877, with the third born in Geelong in 1867. During the 1860s, the war in New Zealand also waxed and waned and hundreds, perhaps thousands of volunteers, many of them from the local Volunteer forces, went from Victoria to fight or as military settlers in New Zealand. In early 1866 Burton was finally able to get across to New Zealand via Sydney while on full pay and on official leave, and spent a month there, Burton is recorded as being welcomed by the staff of General Sir Trevor Chute (the British Commander in New Zealand at the time) at Patea, north-east of Wanganui on the North Island. Burton returned to Victoria on 7 April 1866.

Burton continued his usual duties through the balance of 1866 and through 1867, such as converting the field artillery to horsed artillery, supervising examinations for non-commissioned officers in Clunes, and umpiring a Naval Brigade cutlass drill competition at Sandridge. Then, in November 1867, he was appointed the primary escort officer for the visit of the Duke of Edinburgh to Victoria. Following the visit, another reorganisation of the Volunteer forces found the staff officer positions eliminated. Burton's role as cavalry staff officer was one of those, but on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1868 he was able to be re-appointed to the Victorian Police Force with his old rank of Sub-Inspector.

His smooth return to Police ranks raised eyebrows and questions were asked in Parliament, especially when the Police Commissioner directed that two other police officers were to be reduced in rank to make room for him. It appeared that Burton had been allowed to retain his rank and name in the Victorian Police in 1857 when he had become adjutant of the Yeomanry Corps against any redundancy from that position in the future. The Government of 1868 felt obligated to accept this agreement and directed the Commissioner to re-instate Burton. The reluctant Commissioner in turn may have reduced the two other officers to ensure that the Government was criticised for the decision.

It was not long before Burton was in the thick of police work in the city area, being noted attending a large fire in Carlton in December 1868, and other public order cases in the city throughout 1869 and 1870. By late 1870, Burton found himself working under Superintendent Hare [of Ned Kelly fame] in several inner city districts. Over the next six years, Burton lived at Emerald Hill in South Melbourne. He was regularly reported in the media as he

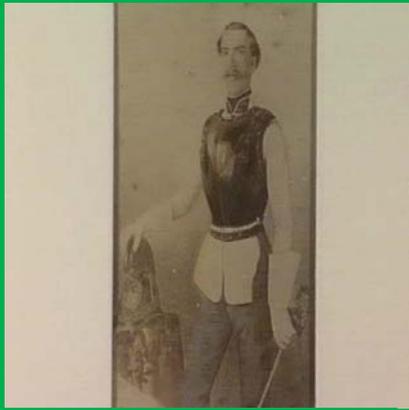


Octavius Skinner Burton,  
Headstone

Died 24 February 1895;  
Buried 25 February 1895;  
CE C 2A

St Kilda Cemetery

Photo: R Douglas



Captain Octavius Skinner  
Burton

Photo: SLV ref: H9187;  
a15295



#### FACEBOOK

Our Facebook page *Residents and Friends of St Kilda Cemetery* has become very popular. As well as news about FOSKC, other items of interest and news from other Cemetery Friends Groups, both here in Australia and also in UK are included, as well as shared pages providing details of WW1 veterans' bios and graves, newspaper articles and so much more. We have special featured posts from time to time with bios and photos of historic persons buried at St Kilda Cemetery and elsewhere on our born this day/died this day posts.

We can't put everything into a newsletter, but try to include up to date news and events on our Facebook page on a daily basis.

Why not Follow us on Facebook and see for yourself

involved himself effectively in every aspect of police work in those districts. His experience in crowd control was often in use. In 1873 he was made an Inspector of Distilleries and although the role attracted no additional salary Burton applied himself to the additional tasks with his usual efficiency.

This, and his good Police work, merited his promotion to Inspector on 19 August 1874 and his own district, Geelong. There Burton hit his stride as his own man. His promotion was timely; by the time he came to Geelong, Burton was the father of seven children. He was of course no stranger to Geelong, having been stationed there when he was adjutant of the Victorian Volunteer Cavalry. He attracted additional duties, becoming, in 1879, an Assistant Inspector of Fisheries. A year later, Burton was superannuated on 31 December 1880 at the age of 57 amidst a general economic restructuring of the Police Force in Victoria and was forced on to his Police pension. Burton took his retirement in Geelong. In 1882 he applied unsuccessfully to be the Collector for Geelong Hospital

Perhaps because of failing health or family pressures or both, by late 1890 Burton had re-located to St. Kilda in Melbourne, where he lived at Westbury Street until his death – of a 'most painful and neurotic disease' – on 24 February 1895, aged 71. Probate, granted on 21<sup>st</sup> April 1895, showed that he had a £500 life insurance policy from his father-in-law's insurance company but that Burton himself left modest assets, just £7 in 'jewellery and trinkets', and £14 in his next pension payment. His widow, Esther, also received £130 from the Police Widows Fund. Obituaries were published in both *The Age* and the *Herald*. His funeral was well-attended with pall bearers from amongst family and close professional friends; Burton was laid to rest in the St. Kilda cemetery.

Octavius Skinner Burton was one of the early characters of the Victorian Police Force and the Volunteer forces. He served for 27 years in those colonial forces and was witness to the burgeoning of the goldfield districts and Geelong as well as 'marvellous Melbourne'. As a police officer, Burton was conscientious and dutiful. No doubt his experiences in the Austro-Hungarian War had developed in him a powerful sense of discipline and a certain toughness, qualities which he brought to both police work and to cavalry staff work in Victoria. While it may now be said that the early Volunteer forces in Victoria were as much social as military, Burton was one who did bring higher professional standards to it, while being trusted with serious responsibility as escort commander for the royal visit of 1867. *The Argus* said of him that: 'Captain Burton, although a strict disciplinarian, was of a genial, kindly temperament, and was much liked by those who had business or social relations with him.'



Photo: ALBERT JACKA  
MEMORIAL

### Private Group Tours for 2019

We hope to do some tours for private groups in 2019. If your group is interested, please email [info@foskc.org](mailto:info@foskc.org) for more details. We charge \$10 per head for group tours and if possible, an afternoon/morning tea will be provided.

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO  
SEEING YOU ON OUR TOURS  
IN 2019. WON'T YOU COME  
AND JOIN US!**

Become a member of the Friends...  
**PLEASE COME AND JOIN US...**

Membership costs \$15, includes free tours throughout the year and newsletter. Email [info@foskc.org](mailto:info@foskc.org) for a membership form.



St Kilda Cemetery is located on the corner of Dandenong Road and Hotham Street, ST KILDA EAST

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## Recent tour/events highlights

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We have been so fortunate in 2018 for tours. No rain, even though it was threatened, and the sun always came out and shone on our parade! Fingers crossed for 2019. Please note that weather is something we have no control over.

Thank you everyone who attended our tours and made them such a success in 2018.

### ALBERT JACKA COMBINED COMMEMORATION CEREMONY, SUNDAY 13 JANUARY 2019

The 87<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Albert Jacka Memorial Service was held by the City of Port Phillip on Sunday 13 January 2019 at 2.00pm at St Kilda Cemetery. Albert Jacka (1893-1932) VC, MC and Bar of the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion, AIF was the first member of the AIF to be awarded a VC in WW1 and was also a mayor of St Kilda.

The Friends of St Kilda Cemetery participated at this well attended ceremony by the laying of flowers at the grave site.

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## Future Tours and events

**PLEASE NOTE: The new toilets in cemetery are near front gate and now operational for future tours. Please ask tour leader for the code to open door.**

### FIRST TOUR FOR 2019:

Wonderful Women Tour, 2.00pm Sunday 24 February 2019

Mayors of St Kilda Tour, 2.00pm Sunday 31 March 2019

Anzac Tour, 2.00pm Sunday 28 April 2019

**PLEASE FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK OR LOOK AT OUR WEBSITE FOR NEWS OF ALL FUTURE TOURS AND EVENTS**

Tour Cost \$15; members free. Afternoon tea included. Bookings: email preferred [info@foskc.org](mailto:info@foskc.org); or tel: Sheila 9531 3648 or Liz 0422379053

All our tours leave from the main entrance to the cemetery in Dandenong Road. Please wear suitable clothing and footwear as we go all weathers, rain, hail or shine.