GEORGE DUNDERDALE (1822-1902)—AUTHOR AND PUBLIC SERVANT

Born into a Catholic family at Cloughton near Lancaster, Lancashire UK in 1822, George Dunderdale completed his education at the English College in Lisbon, Portugal from 1837-42. In 1849, he travelled to the USA where he worked as a boat-hand on a voyage up the Mississippi River as far as St Louis. In New Orleans his experience of seeing black slaves being sold off at a market had a marked impression on him, and led to his speaking out in future against oppression and injustice. By 12 October 1850, the US Census shows he was employed as a school-teacher at Joliet, Illinois.

Dunderdale returned home to England before becoming attracted to Victoria in 1853, by the gold discoveries. On arrival, he travelled to the diggings at Bendigo and the Ovens goldfields, but had little success as a digger. He returned to school teaching at Colac at the salary of £130 per annum, but by 1857 had taken an appointment as a clerk of court at Colac. In April 1857, he married Elizabeth McNamara at Geelong and they had seven children. In 1868, after 12 years at Colac, he was transferred to Port Albert (Gippsland). He bought a substantial house there, known as Wood Cot Park, and some land surrounding it. It was placed on the National Estate Register in 1978. Dunderdale was a born raconteur and wrote a series of stories and sketches for separate publication which were ultimately published as the “Book of the Bush” (1870) in London by Ward Lock. The first half recounts his time in the central and western districts of Victoria, as well as the early history of Bass Strait and the southern coastline of Victoria, around the time European settlement began with the Henty’s at Portland; the second half, his experiences of Gippsland. Many of the stories deal with the more colourful aspects of topics such as discovery and exploration, pioneering in Gippsland, convicts, shipwrecks, whaling, sealers and swagmen. Other sketches record, with “disarming modesty and sardonic humour”, the author’s own experiences.

In another publication, “Among the Diggers”, Dunderdale describes his journey to Bendigo in 1853, conditions on the diggings, and his impressions of the disparate characters gathered there, many of them ex-convicts. Contemptuous of authority at any time, he sympathises with the indignation of the diggers at the imposition of heavy licence fees and frequent inspections by goldfields police, and recalls talking to fugitives and other participants of the Eureka Stockade riots. Some of his anecdotes deal with his life as a state officer in the bush where the majority of the officials condemned to a life in the dreary townships, tried to alleviate their misery by drinking and gambling.

Dunderdale also wrote “Prairie and Bush” (1891) which is based on the same experiences and compares frontier life in the United States and Australia. He had other works published, but his Australian stories remain his legacy.

We have a lot more however, for which to thank Dunderdale. Whilst at Alberton, he was part of a two-man team in charge of justice, the other person being the remarkable public servant, explorer and anthropologist Alfred Howitt who was Police Magistrate there at the time. Between them, their actions in 1863 led to the saving of the records from the tiny court house at Alberton.

In 1883, there were still public records, including Convict Indents at Alberton dating back to 1844 when the region was administered by Crown Lands Commissioner Tyers, “the king of Gippsland”. By a remarkable chain of events, these early records became the first to be transferred by a department to the Public Library in Melbourne.
EDMUND ASHLEY OF CHESTERFIELD

Edmund Ashley was a very well known St. Kilda identity in the mid to late 19th century. However, he was also a large land owner in the Scoresby area and had influence in business opportunities in early Melbourne. In the mid-1850s and early '60s, Ashley was in partnership with one time Victorian Premier, Richard Heales as well as a builder named William Carter. The company, Ashley and Heales were suppliers and manufacturers of early coaches and carts. The partnership also had a presence in Franklin Street in Melbourne.

Ashley and Heales purchased extensive properties in the Scoresby area in the late 1850s. In 1867, the partners purchased 168 acres on the south east corner of Ferntree Gully and Stud Roads. Around the same time, Ashley purchased 349 acres of the west side of Stud Road north of Ferntree Gully. He later purchased further properties on the north side of Ferntree Gully Road that was to become known as “Chesterfield Farm”. At one stage, Ashley held over 1,200 acres at Scoresby.

The partners harvested blackwood timber off these properties, as well as elsewhere in the Dandenong Ranges, for use in the coach manufacturing business. In 1861, the partnership between Ashley and Heales started to falter. The following year, the firm then known as Ashley, Heales and Carter was dissolved; only two years later Richard Heales died at the age 42.

Edmund Ashley was born on the 7 June 1818, at the village of Tupton near Chesterfield, in Derbyshire. He was apprenticed at the age of 14 to Robert Thompson, of Chesterfield, to learn the business of wheelwrighting, agricultural implement manufacturing and carpentry. At the age of 21, Ashley was engaged by a Mr. Hall, of Chesterfield, to manage his business, which was similar to that of Thompson’s. In 1841, Ashley decided to migrate to the new possibilities in Melbourne. Ashley was on board the ship, Himalaya with Heales. The pair arrived in Port Phillip on 26 February 1842.

Ashley’s older brother John lived at the Scoresby house, whilst Edmund resided in St. Kilda. Edmund was a leader of the Temperance movement in early Melbourne but his brother John was not. John owned the Ferntree Gully Hotel in the 1860s and 1870s. When John died on 12 October 1878 at the age of 64, Edmund inherited the hotel. This was an awkward time for Edmund, but he decided to continue the ownership. Many years later, it was discovered that the hotel was built partly on the Burwood Road (Highway) reservation. The building was at the time licensed to Thomas Samuel Grimwood and later to Annie Blair. However the building had to go, but it was not demolished until well after Edmund’s death.

Edmund was one of the founders of the Melbourne Benevolent Asylum and was involved in a number of other businesses, such as the Union Benefit Building and Investment Society, the Second Victoria Building and Investment Society and the Melbourne and Hobson’s Bay Railway. Ashley was briefly on the Council at St. Kilda (1883-84) and had been appointed a Justice of the Peace in Victoria in 1861.

Edmund had married Emily Willifer on 18 May 1864 in London on one of his trips back to England. The couple had nine children, all but one reaching adulthood, and seven were sons. Edmund died at his St Kilda home Chesterfield in Tennyson Street on 7 December 1892, while the rest of the family were absent at church. He was aged 74. He was buried in the St. Kilda Cemetery the following day—Other Denomination “C” 211. Ashley left behind an estate worth £61,000.
TRANSferred to Public Records Office, Victoria.  

Dunderdale as a writer has a high degree of credibility as a historical witness and captured well the atmosphere of the early days in Port Phillip. In 1886, at the age of 64 and after three decades of public service, he retired to Windsor in Melbourne. He died aged 80 at The Avenue, Windsor on 28 December 1902, and was buried at St Kilda Cemetery on 30 December 1902 (RC “A” 692). An obituary to his death appeared in “Austral Light”, a journal in which many of his stories had been published.

(Source: “Provenance, The first years of the Victorian Archives”, Professor E W Russell, Vol 1, No 2, PROV, 2003)
Cemetery Conversations

**FORTHCOMING TOURS**

Best of 2010  
Sunday 28 November 2010 at 10.30am  
Join us on our "End of Year" morning tour through the Cemetery featuring the highlights of graves visited during 2010.  
If you missed tours during the year, this is your chance to capture the feeling of past tours and recall the year's events.  
Tour leader: Elizabeth Hore.

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**Pick of the Plots**  
Sunday 6 February 2011 at 10.30am  
(Tour cost $15.00)  
Tour leader: Elizabeth Hore.

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**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).  
$5.00 for members of the Friends of St. Kilda Cemetery.  
Children (under 18 years) are free.

Bookings: Reservations for all tours are essential. Numbers are limited. Contact (03) 9551 6832 or 0422 379 053 to avoid disappointment. You can now book on-line at http://www.foskc.org (incl. $0.30 booking fee).

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.

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**KATHERINE ADA MACKAY (1901-75)—POLICE WOMAN**

Early police women often had to battle for recognition, and Katherine Ada Mackay was no exception. Born on 10 December 1901 in Colombo, Ceylon, Kath joined the Victorian Public Service in 1922, moving to Victoria Police that year to work in the chief commissioner's office. On 16 April 1930, she became one of eight serving policewomen. Initially assigned to the plain clothes branch, by 1935 she was attached to the Criminal Investigation Branch at Russell Street headquarters.

Promoted to senior constable in June 1943, Kath was given charge of the policewomen's section. This was a significant achievement. There were only 15 policewomen at the time, but their role was enhanced because of the number of men absent from the force on active service. Although restricted to welfare and domestic issues, and to cases involving women, she received official commendations in April 1942 for her part in the conviction of a man for incest and in April 1945 for helping to solve a murder case. She was regarded by her superiors as "well conducted, efficient and reliable".

Future promotion was not easy and in 1953 when two men were promoted ahead of her to the rank of sergeant, Kath appealed to the Police Classification Board. In March 1954, the case was dismissed on the ground that Kath was unfitted as a woman to fulfil the duties of a sergeant in charge of a station. The newspapers reported it widely. It took another two years for recognition until on 22 August 1956 Kath became the first woman in Victoria to be promoted sergeant when she was appointed officer-in-charge of the new Women Police Branch. In June 1959, she was presented with the Police Long Service and Good Conduct medal. Superannuated from the Victoria Police on 10 December 1961, aged 60, she died on 15 June 1975 at Brighton. Her remains were interred in Ind "C" 389.


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**NOTICE TO MEMBERS**

The Committee has decided to charge members a small fee for attendance on future tours. Our group is small; our costs involved in administration are continually increasing. We have noted that other Friends' groups charge members a reduced fee for tours, plus the results of our recent survey conducted on tours and through membership renewals for 2010-11 showed support from members for this small charge.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Cost for members to attend tours is now $5.00 (half price).