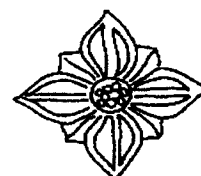

CEMETERY CONVERSATIONS

The Newsletter of the Friends of St Kilda Cemetery



Issue 2

April 1999

Latest news of the Friends

IT is now well into 1999 and many of you are probably wondering what the Friends have been up to and might be planning for this year. We apologise for not sending this newsletter out sooner.

Our tours during 1998 have been well attended averaging around 25 to 30 people each time. Apart from the general tour of the cemetery, a Horticultural Tour was conducted in October 1998. This was the first of our 'theme' tours of which we plan to run more in 1999.

In December 1998 we ran a twilight tour of the cemetery which was held on a very pleasant summer's Saturday evening. Those that attended felt that it was a pleasant way to round off the Friends' first year.

Our first tour of 1999 was a 'theme' tour of the Hebrew sections of the Cemetery. For this tour, we were able to engage the assistance of Ephraim Finch. Ephraim has a wonderful historical knowledge of Melbourne's Jewish community and is head of the Chevra Kadisha. The Chevra Kadisha performs the religious burial rites of the Jewish community in all Melbourne cemeteries. We plan to repeat this tour later in 1999.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find a program of events for the remainder of 1999. Please put them in your diary now. We hope that there is variety in our 1999 program to keep you interested. ■

Program for 1999

Our program of events for 1999 is presented below. Unless otherwise indicated, tours of St Kilda Cemetery leave from the Dandenong Road entrance gates at 2.00 PM.

Sunday 25 April 1999 at 2.00 PM Military Tour of the Cemetery

This ANZAC day tour looks at Military people buried within the Cemetery. St Kilda Cemetery has associations with the Napoleonic Wars, the Eureka Stockade, the New Zealand Maori Wars, the Crimean War, the Boer War and the First World War. Come and learn more about the Cemetery's rich military associations.

Sunday 6 June 1999 at 2.00 PM General Tour of the Cemetery

Our ever popular general tour of the Cemetery looks at the graves of famous and not so famous people including the 'Glen Huntly' pioneers referred to elsewhere in this newsletter.

Sunday 15 August 1999 at 2.00 PM Tour of the Hebrew Sections

This tour looks at the two Hebrew sections of the Cemetery. We look at some of the fascinating members of Melbourne's Jewish community including the Michaelis family (industrialists), Ada Phillips (pioneer of Liberal Judaism in Australia), Elias Blaubaum (first Minister of the St Kilda Synagogue) and Nahum Barnet (architect of the Robur Tea building in South Melbourne and the Melbourne Synagogue on Toorak Road). We also look at Jewish burial customs and practices.

Sunday 5 September 1999 at 2.00 PM Tour of Boroondara Cemetery

Join the Friends on a tour of one of Melbourne's most interesting 19th century cemeteries. Come and see what is perhaps the most elaborate monument in any Australian cemetery as well as the grave of newspaper proprietor David Syme. The cemetery is located in High Street, Kew (Melways Map 31 Reference E5). The Cemetery can be reached by taking the No 48 North Balwyn Tram from the city to the cemetery gates. Please assemble at the Cemetery Gates at 2.00 PM.

Sunday 3 October 1999 at 2.00 PM Horticultural Tour

This tour will be led by horticulturist and cemetery expert, John Hawker. The tour will look at the trees and vegetation of the cemetery; the symbolic use of plants within cemeteries; and the graves of people associated with botany, horticulture and the nursery trade. The tour begins at 2.00 PM and will leave from the main gates on Dandenong Road.

Sunday 10 October 1999 at 2.30 PM Talk on 19th Century Cemeteries of the UK and USA

Geoff Austin will again present his illustrated talk on famous 19th century cemeteries of the United Kingdom and United States at the meeting of the Historical Society of St Kilda on Sunday 10 October 1999 commencing at 2.30 PM in the Community Room, St Kilda Library, 150 Carlisle Street, St Kilda. You are invited to attend.

Sunday 7 November 1999 at 2.00 PM Symbolism in the cemetery

This tour will focus on the symbols to be found on headstones. What is the symbolism behind the urn, the broken column and the obelisk? What is the meaning behind the rose, the poppy or the anchor inscribed upon particular monuments? Tour commences at 2.00 PM from the Dandenong Road gates.

Spotlight on St Kilda - The Glen Huntly Graves

Sunday 18 April 1999 saw a gathering of descendants of John Craig in St Kilda Cemetery. The gathering was almost one hundred years to the very day since the unveiling of the monument in St Kilda Cemetery to the Glen Huntly pioneers. To quote the inscription on the monument:

On December 13th 1839 the emigrant ship 'Glen Huntly' left Greenock, Scotland and arrived at Hobsons' Bay on 17th April 1840. Many of the passengers suffering from fever were landed at the Red Bluff, St Kilda on 24 April 1840. That being the first Quarantine Station in Victoria. A few days later JOHN CRAIG, JAMES MATHERS, GEORGE ARMSTRONG succumbed to the disease and were interred at the Bluff. Owing to the encroachment of the sea their remains were exhumed and removed to the St Kilda Cemetery on 27th August 1898 by the Board of Public Health



The photograph above shows the graveside service at St Kilda in August 1898 following the removal of the remains of the Glen Huntly pioneers from Point Ormond (as Red Bluff is now known). The existing monument at St Kilda was unveiled on 16 April 1899. The Glen Huntly story is described on our general tour of the cemetery. ■

The 19th Century Cemetery Pt 2

In our last issue we presented an extract from Geoff Austin's talk on the evolution of the modern cemetery. Presented below is an a further extract from Geoff's talk which looks at the Parisian cemetery of Pere Lachaise and the influence it had on the development of the modern cemetery in Britain.

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Pere Lachaise

The first great landscaped cemetery in modern Europe was the Parisian cemetery of Pere Lachaise. This cemetery with its serpentine paths was set out on a hill to the east of the city in 1804. Within its Arcadian landscape, classical monuments and vaults were erected as memorials to the dead. By 1820, Pere Lachaise had become the admired model for other European and American cemeteries.

The design of Pere Lachaise owes much to the English landscaped garden of the eighteenth century. The fashion in landscape design in England in the eighteenth century was to create a 'natural' landscape which was, in fact, highly contrived. Small hills, depressions or lakes would be constructed; trees and shrubs planted at strategic locations and small buildings and structures erected to create a landscape which was pleasing to the eye. In some instances, monuments and mausolea would even be erected within the landscape as with the mausoleum at Castle Howard in Yorkshire.

The entrepreneurs behind Pere Lachaise, in order to secure the cemeteries success and status, chose it as the place for the reinterment of the famous French lovers Abelard and Heloise.

The cemetery became the final resting spot for many famous 19th and 20th century figures including Frederic Chopin, Jacques Louis David, Balzac, Isadora Duncan, Marcel Proust, Sarah Bernhardt, Renae Lalique, Amadeo Modigliani, Edith Piaf, Oscar Wilde, Gertrude Stein and Jim Morrison from the 1970s rock group 'The Doors'

Pere Lachaise can be easily visited. It is now a short distance from central Paris. Take the Metro to either Pere Lachaise or Gambetta. The main entrance is located on Boulevard de Ménilmontant. Maps of the cemetery are available for a fee at the entrance.

In Britain – The Glasgow Necropolis

Soon after, in the 1820s, the people of Glasgow took a hillside, which was not dissimilar to the hillside at Pere Lachaise, to establish the famous Glasgow Necropolis. The proposed Glasgow Necropolis was intended to be non-denominational. In the mid 19th century the cemetery was regarded as the Westminster Abbey of Glasgow and nearly every eminent member of Glasgow Society who died between the 1830s and 1870s is buried or memorialised there.

Its setting and layout have led many commentators to claim that the Glasgow Necropolis is perhaps the most spectacular cemetery in Britain, certainly in Scotland.

Kensal Green Cemetery London

The General Cemetery Company opened the General Cemetery of All Souls at Kensal Green in 1833. Again the model for the cemetery was Pere Lachaise. The cemetery covered some 77 acres.

As with many 19th century English cemeteries, Kensal Green cemetery contains two chapels - an Anglican Chapel for the conformists and a second chapel for the non-conformists. Part of the cemetery grounds were consecrated for the use of the Anglicans while the remaining unconsecrated ground was used by the Dissenters. Both chapels are located atop subterranean catacombs. These large spaces were constructed of brick. Brick piers supported the roof.

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Within the space, shelves were constructed for the placement of coffins. Catacombs were a feature of a number of other English cemeteries of this time and, for the user, were relatively expensive when compared to the cost of a burial plot.

The attractive landscaped grounds of Kensal Green soon proved popular. However, the fashionable status of the cemetery received a major boost when it was to become the burial place of Princess Sophia and the Duke of Sussex, two of the children of George III. No doubt due to their royalty, these two were buried closest to the Anglican chapel.

The General Cemetery Company is still in existence, the only one of the nineteenth century London private cemetery companies to have survived. The cemetery today is overcrowded with monuments and suffers from basic neglect. A crematorium was built within the grounds in 1939.

The cemetery is well worth a visit. Take the Underground to Kensal Green, in West London. Guided tours are run every Sunday and visit the Catacombs on the first Sunday of the month (although it would be wise to check for the latest details).

Norwood Cemetery London

The first successor to Kensal Green was the South Metropolitan Cemetery at Norwood. The cemetery was built on a hill and consisted of broad sweeping paths winding up to the two chapels on the hill. The cemetery was opened in 1837 and covers 39 acres.

Unfortunately, the cemetery has suffered. Bomb damage in World War II led to the demolition of the two chapels. In 1966, the local Council, the Borough of Lambeth, took over the cemetery from the undercapitalised South Metropolitan Cemetery Company. The Council embarked on a program of removing monuments and tidying the grounds. Unfortunately, this has had the effect of changing the Victorian character of the cemetery. However, there are still some monuments and features worth seeing.

In our next issue we will continue our look at significant 19th century cemeteries of London. ■

Odd Spot

In 1998, the City of Port Phillip had cause to write to the Necropolis (the managers of St Kilda Cemetery) regarding proposals for the cemetery. The letter was sent to the Necropolis care-of Dandenong Road, East St Kilda. However, as there was nobody at the Dandenong Road address to receive the correspondence, the letter was redirected to the Dead Letter Office. How appropriate! ■

Who are the Friends?

Established in 1998 the "Friends of St Kilda Cemetery" has adopted the objective to:

Promote the conservation and appreciation of the St Kilda Cemetery as a place of remembrance, of historic importance and of natural beauty.

At present, the Friends operates as a non-profit unincorporated group. Our long term aim is to hold regular tours; talks and other activities that promote the heritage values of the cemetery. We want to share our passion and knowledge of the Cemetery with as many people as possible. At present, the Friends is in its formative stages. No fees or subscriptions are payable to be kept informed. ■

Our emblem

The emblem at the top of page one has been drawn from a detailing which is to be found in the cemetery. In our last issue we asked if you new from where it was derived. This detailing is to be found on the iron gates at the entrance to the cemetery on Dandenong Road. ■

Become a Friend

If you would like to become a Friend of St Kilda Cemetery and receive further details of tours and activities please drop a note to Pearl Donald, 66 Southey Street, Elwood Victoria 3184 or telephone Pearl on 9531 6832. ■