

Friends of St Kilda Cemetery Inc



NEWS BULLETIN FEBRUARY 2014

ARCHITECTS, BUILDERS AND ENGINEERS AT ST KILDA CEMETERY

What would Melbourne be like if it did not possess its fabulous Town Hall, the Supreme Court, the GPO, its historic theatres, St Michael's Church and the Exhibition Buildings? These are just a few of the landmark buildings which were designed, engineered and constructed by people buried in St Kilda cemetery.

Geoff Austin led our final tour for the year on Sunday 17 November. Participants visited the graves of some of Victoria's most accomplished 19th and 20th century architects, builders and engineers - the people who were responsible for building Marvellous Melbourne.



Some participants at the grave of William Pitt

Among the graves visited were those of James Henry Fox, William Pitt, Peter Kerr and Sir John Warren Swanson.

By 1858, **James Henry Fox**, who had trained as an architect in London, was established in Geelong as an architect and surveyor. He later moved to Hamilton and established a reputation among the wealthy Western District squattocracy. He

designed Chatsworth House on the banks of the Hopkins river for the pioneer pastoralist, John Moffat, who entertained Prince Albert there in 1867. In 1869 he moved to Ballarat and designed Clunes townhall and courthouse. He was also involved with some of the building works at Werribee Park for the Chrinside brothers.

William Pitt (1855 -1918) was an architect, public servant and politician.



The Olderfleet Buildings designed by William Pitt

His most prolific years as an architect coincided with Melbourne's boom period in the 80s. He began his own architectural practice in 1879 and was highly sought after. Although some of his grandest buildings have since been demolished, including the Melbourne Coffee Palace and the Federal Coffee Palace, many examples of his architectural work remain today: the Old Stock Exchange, Queens Bridge, the Rialto Buildings, the Olderfleet Buildings, Victoria Brewery. He was also renowned as a specialist in theatre design and designed the Princess Theatre. In 1887 he was appointed Vice -President of the Victorian Institute of Architects.

Throughout his life he had political aspirations. He was elected to the City of Collingwood's council in 1885 and became mayor in 1890. He was also a member of the Upper House from 1904 - 1910.

His roots were in the suburb of St Kilda . He was educated there and lived there for some time and one of his finest works is St Kilda Town Hall.

Peter Kerr (1820 - 1912) was educated and served his articles in Aberdeen, Scotland . In 1848 he went to London and worked in the office of Sir Charles Barry, architect of the new Houses of Parliament, migrating to Melbourne in 1852. He joined the partnership of J.G. Knight and Thomas Kemp, architects and engineers.. From 1866-92 he served in the Public Works Department. His notable works included portions of the Law Courts, Government House, the General Post Office and Customs House (now the Immigration Museum). His reputation, however, rests on his appointment in 1877 as architect of Parliament House.

Sir John Warren Swanson, together with his brother, Donald, ran the family building firm.



Sir John Warren Swanson in his Mayor's robes

In the 1890s the building industry slumped and Donald moved temporarily to Queensland, leaving John in charge of the Melbourne office. When activity resumed, Swanson Bros became one of Melbourne's leading builders, specializing in contracts requiring extensive masonry work; at one stage 150 stonemasons were employed at their William Street yard.

The firm built the Crown Law offices, the Collins Street Assembly, the Arts and other buildings at the University of Melbourne, Scotch College and the Athenaeum Club. After much controversy, Swanson Bros was chosen in 1911 to construct the reinforced concrete dome on top of the Melbourne Public Library.

John became the public face of the firm. A prominent freemason, John was a Melbourne city councillor, chairman of the council's public works committee and mayor.

Swanson Bros remained as a family business until 1983.

ALBERT JACKA SERVICE

The 82nd Anniversary of the death of WW1 hero, Albert Jacka, was commemorated at a Memorial Service on Sunday 19th January.



The Mayor, Cr Amanda Stevens spoke of Jacka enlisting as a bright-eyed, enthusiastic recruit a hundred years ago and how his heroism on the battlefield has led people to see him as a symbol of the spirit of the Anzacs. Both Cr Stevens and Mr John Cullen OAM, Honorary Treasurer of the RSL (Victorian Branch) remarked on how, as a civic leader after the war, he showed great compassion and worked tirelessly to improve the lives of the unemployed and those who were experiencing financial hardship.

FORTHCOMING TOURS

Sunday 13 April 2pm 'Notable Interments at St Kilda Cemetery' - a tour especially for those who have little familiarity with the cemetery.

Sunday 18 May 2pm Law Week tour "What a Way to Go" - by popular demand, a repeat of last year's most successful tour.

Sunday 15 June 2pm Knights of the British Empire
Bookings 9531 6832

Details of our tours for the rest of the year will be in our May bulletin.

NOTE THAT TOURS ARE NOW FREE FOR MEMBERS OF FOSKOC; \$10 for non-members