

# CEMETERY CONVERSATIONS



The Newsletter of the Friends of St Kilda Cemetery Inc.

Issue 6

May 2001

## Funeral of a Federation father

A notice in the Melbourne 'Argus' on October 8, 1919 read:

*Deakin. - The Funeral of the late Honourable ALFRED DEAKIN will leave the Federal Parliament House Tomorrow Morning (Thursday, the 9<sup>th</sup> inst.), at 11.30am. A short service will be held in Queens Hall at 11 o'clock, after which the cortege will proceed to the St.Kilda Cemetery.*

*A.A.SLEIGHT, Funeral Directors. Phone 410.*

**ALFRED DEAKIN**, shortly to be buried in St Kilda Cemetery, had been an enthusiastic federalist - Australia's first attorney general, and prime minister three times between 1903 and 1910. But by the time Deakin retired from public life in 1912, his health had been severely impaired by many years of exhausting political work.

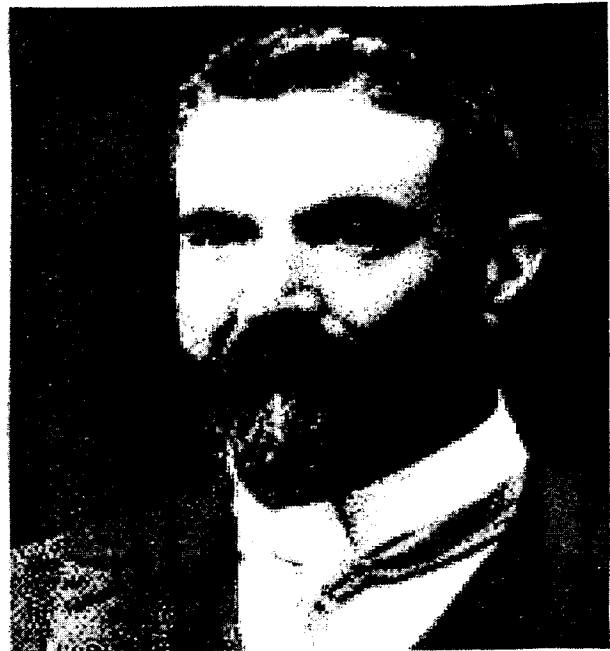
He had lived his last years in near seclusion at the family residence - 'Llanarth' - in Walsh Street, South Yarra or at 'Ballara' - their Point Lonsdale holiday home. The only exception was a trip to the Panama Exhibition as Australian High Commissioner, and later a long sea trip to London in an effort to regain his health.

Deakin died on October 7, 1919 from complications following a stroke. Prime Minister Billy Hughes announced the death in the Federal Parliament on October 8, claiming that Deakin was a man whose name had entwined itself about Australia's history. A State funeral was arranged and the service conducted by Archdeacon Hindley in Queens Hall, Federal Parliament House in Spring Street, Melbourne - the place where Deakin had achieved some of his greatest triumphs.

The Prime Minister later took his place as one of the pall bearers, along with Victorian Premier Mr. Lawson MLA and Melbourne Grammar headmaster Mr. R.P. Franklin M.A. The coffin was draped simply with the Union Jack and a wreath of gum leaves.

The cortege left Parliament House at 11.30am and proceeded along hushed city streets, the Defence Department band playing the Dead March in 'Saul'.

Thousands of people watched respectfully as the procession wended its way to St Kilda Cemetery via Spring, Collins and Swanston streets, St. Kilda Rd, Wellington Street and Dandenong Road followed by 30 motor cars occupied by Federal MPs.



Deakin was laid to rest in a simple marble grave topped by a monument depicting an open book - next to the grave occupied by his father and mother - William Deakin who died in 1892 and Sarah who died in 1908.

Fifteen years later Patti Deakin also died - at 'Ballara' - on December 30, 1934 and was buried in her husband's grave. When Deakin's sister Sarah died aged 86 in 1937, she too was buried at St Kilda - with her mother and father.

### The Ghost of Alfred Deakin

(played by walks officianado Meyer Eidelson)

will lead a

### Federation Tour of St Kilda Cemetery

at 2pm on Saturday, May 5, 2001.

All Welcome

*Assemble at the main gates in Dandenong Road. Details: 9531 6832*

**INSIDE:** Cowderoy plaque...3 Hopetoun Cemetery ...2 Bubonic Plague in Australia ...4 Nation Builders ...3

# Hopetoun Catholic Cemetery

By Geoff Austin



In the last issue of *Cemetery Conversations*, mention was made of a small cemetery adjacent to the Western Freeway on the Melbourne side of Bacchus Marsh.

This is the Hopetoun Cemetery which was operated by the Catholic Church from 1850 to 1941 and was the first formal cemetery in the Bacchus Marsh area.

The Cemetery, and the now demolished Church of St Laurence O'Toole, which also existed on the site, owe their existence to local settlers John Leahy and John and Michael Egan. Leahy had settled in the Bacchus Marsh area in 1844.

In 1850, Leahy and the two Egans set aside one acre for the building of a Roman Catholic church and cemetery. The brick church was also to function as the local Catholic school.

By the late 1850s, the settlement at Hopetoun began to decline with the development of nearby Bacchus Marsh. This led to the eventual closure of the school and chapel and a decline in burials at Hopetoun. The Bacchus Marsh (Maddingley) Cemetery opened in 1858.

Demolition of the school/chapel is thought to have occurred in the 1870s, although the footings of this building still survive within the Cemetery. The various surviving headstones within the cemetery date from the period 1854 to 1909. One of these headstones marks the burial of Jeremiah Connell, 4 years, who died in April 1851. However, as a burial register was never kept, it is unknown if this was the first burial. Estimates of the total number of burials vary between 150 and 250 persons. There are about 25 surviving headstones, including John Leahy and his family. The remaining Cemetery plantings include Monterey and Italian Cypress and a very rare Blue Mexican Cypress.

When construction of the Western Freeway was planned in 1970, the route would have involved the levelling of the Hopetoun Cemetery. However, community action led to the final route being diverted.

The Cemetery is significant as evidence of pre-goldrush life in Victoria. It is also a rare example of a churchyard cemetery in Victoria, most cemeteries being publicly operated. It is one of seven known Catholic cemeteries in the State.

Heritage Victoria has established a steering group with representatives from the local community, Catholic church and Shire Council to guide the future care of the cemetery and a conservation plan has recently been completed.

## Tours & Cemetery Theatre

2001

**Saturday May 5 at 2pm**

Alfred Deakin, Prime Minister

\*

**Sunday June 3 at 2pm**

Madam Brussels (operator of Melbourne's most notorious and refined brothel in the late 19th century)

\*

**Sunday June 24 at 2pm**

Federation tour led by the Friends of St Kilda Cemetery Inc.

\*

**Sunday September 2 at 2pm**

Alfred Deakin, Prime Minister (repeat)

\*

**Sunday October 28 at 2pm**

Charlie Truelove (former Cemetery manager) with the Choir from Presentation College

*All tours leave from the main gates of the Cemetery at 2pm unless otherwise advised*



This project has been assisted by the City of Port Phillip Cultural Program Board through its Cultural Development Fund

## CREMATION MEMORIAL

### St Kilda Cemetery

*Choose a memorial rose position or wall niche and you create a lasting focus for remembrance forever*

THE NECROPOLIS  
SPRINGVALE



*Service and Care Always*

PO Box 1159 RMDC CLAYTON VIC 3169

# The Nation Builders

**LOCAL RESEARCHER** Meyer Eidelson is currently researching the St Kilda Cemetery and its Federation connections. The project, 'Port Phillip Pioneers of Federation', has been funded by the Commonwealth under the Federation Community Projects Program.

The lives of the following individuals are being researched by Meyer and many will feature in forthcoming Cemetery tours:

<b>BROOKES, Herbert and Ivy</b>	(The Citizens)
<b>COWDEROY, Benjamin</b>	(The Mayor)
<b>DEAKIN, Alfred</b>	(The Visionary)
<b>DUFFY, John Gavan</b>	(The Catholic)
<b>GLEN HUNTLY</b>	(The Emigrants)
<b>KERFERD, George Briscoe</b>	(The Self-made Man)
<b>HODGSON, Caroline</b>	(The Madam)
<b>HADDON, Frederick &amp; MCKINLEY, Alexander</b>	(Newspapermen)
<b>HOAD, Sir John Charles</b>	(The Major General)
<b>HOLROYD, Sir Edward Dundas</b>	(The Imperialist)
<b>INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIA</b>	(The Outsider)
<b>JACKA, Albert</b>	(The Hero)
<b>MICHIE, Sir Archibald</b>	(The Queens Counsel)
<b>MITCHELL, Sir Edward Fancourt</b>	(The Sporting Barrister)
<b>MUNRO, James</b>	(The Wowser)
<b>O'LOUGHLIN, Sir Bryan</b>	(The Irish Premier)
<b>PITT, William</b>	(The Architect)
<b>REDE, Robert</b>	(The Enforcer)
<b>RENTOUL, Laurence John</b>	(The Clergyman)
<b>ST.LEDGER, Anthony James Joseph</b>	(The Unionist)
<b>SARGOOD, Sir Frederick</b>	(The Merchant)
<b>SAWERS, John</b>	(The Banker)
<b>SMITH, Robert Murray</b>	(The Free Trader)
<b>STEWART, Sir Gorge Charles Thomas</b>	(The Watcher)
<b>TURNER, Sir George</b>	(Plain George)
<b>VON MUELLER, Baron Sir Frederick</b>	(The Botanist)

## CEMETERY CONVERSATIONS 3



(L-R) Councillors Florence Gardiner and James Mason with Mayor Benjamin Cowderoy (1861)

### St Kilda's first mayor recognised

**B**JENAMIN COWDEROY, St Kilda's first mayor, has finally been recognised by the installation of a plaque on his grave in St Kilda Cemetery.

City of Port Phillip mayor, Julian Hill unveiled the plaque on March 18th in the presence of some of Cowderoy's descendents who had flown from Sydney for the event.

Born in 1812 in Berkshire, Cowderoy was educated at Christ's Hospital, receiving a classical education that probably helped when he designed the crest and selected the motto of St Kilda still in place today.

He arrived in Melbourne at the end of 1852, and joined in business ventures with F. J. Sargood, Thomas Fulton, Lachlan McKinnon and other prominent men. By 1864 he was appointed secretary of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce.

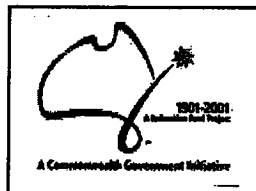
At the first meeting of the St Kilda Council held on March 11, 1857 in a room beside the Junction Hotel, St Kilda Junction, Cowderoy was elected chairman of the Council for the ensuing municipal year. He took the reins again in 1861 before retiring from Council in 1866.

Cowderoy lived in Fulton Street, St Kilda and married three times. He died aged 92 in 1904, his funeral cortege taking two hours to travel from Oakleigh to the St Kilda Cemetery. At the time of his death he was one of the oldest Justices of the Peace in the State. Cowderoy Street and Cowderoy Drain are named after him.

■ Many thanks to the students of Presentation College and teacher Patricia McGready for help with posters and projects for the anniversary of Federation.

### The Port Phillip Pioneers of Federation Project

is supported and funded by the  
Commonwealth of Australia  
under the  
Federation Community  
Projects Program



### Walks in Port Phillip

*A Guide to the landscapes of a City*

by

Meyer Eidelson

published by the City of Port Phillip

Funded by the Federation Community Projects Program  
\$10 - available from local bookshops & 'The Friends'

## The bubonic plague in Australia

Dr. Thomas Gray was health officer with the Board of Public Health in the late 1890s when this mysterious incident involving Bubonic Plague bacilli occurred. Dr. Gray is buried in St Kilda Cemetery.

Detective John Mitchell Christie thought he was courting death in November 1898 when he was asked by the Public Health Department to hurry to the Victorian town of Macarthur, near Warrnambool, to seize Bubonic Plague bacilli that an English doctor had brought into Australia from India.

With the order was the message: *'If on this special service for your country, you should catch the plague, you will be buried with all due ceremony and your relatives will be provided for and a fitting monument will be erected to your memory.'* It is said Christie was overcome by emotion when he read this. Who wouldn't be!

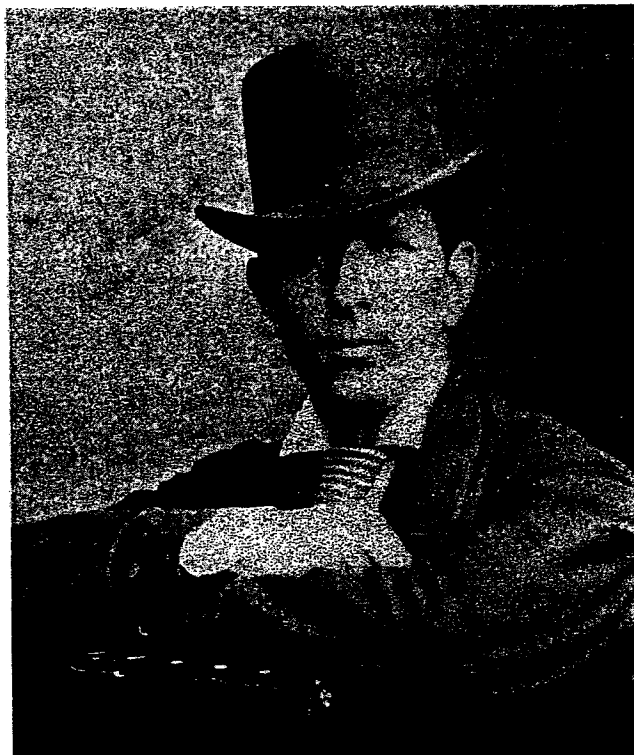
The doctor who had imported the germs six months earlier was Leonard Haydon. He claimed he wanted to experiment with them but when he refused a request to give them up, the board of public health sent its health officer, Dr Gray, to Macarthur. He reported back that Dr Haydon would not relinquish the germs unless he received £300 compensation.

Customs had no legal power to interfere for there was no duty on microbes. But it was later found that the microbes had been imported in gelatine, on which the duty was threepence a pound. As Haydon had not paid this, customs was entitled to seize the gelatine.

This was the stage at which Christie was brought in and told to seize the microbes despite all hazards. Dr. Gray was on his way back to Melbourne when he was stopped by a telegraph message and told to join Christie at Macarthur. They met and the two travelled to Port Fairy, arriving at midnight. They were up at daybreak and drove to MacArthur to meet Dr Haydon and his brother Gerald, also a doctor. Leonard Haydon told Christie he had done 12 months work on the microbes and repeated his request for £300. Haydon eventually went to his brother's surgery and brought out a tin box that contained 30 glass tubes filled with gelatine. This he said contained the bacilli of the Bubonic Plague.

Christie quickly closed the box and put seals on it. Hayden admitted he had two more tubes and promised to hand them over. It seemed to be a casual sort of arrangement because he did not do this until after the party had eaten lunch. Then Dr Gray lit a kerosene fire and boiled all the tubes.

Dr. Haydon may have been badly done by however. He maintained he was a public benefactor who had brought the bacilli from India solely in the interest of protecting the Victorian public. If plague broke out, he would have had the only known antidote ready for immediate use. He said the Public Health Department knew he imported the bacilli and had inspected the tubes after he arrived. There had been no secrecy. His brother had written to the Premier about it.



*Australia's Sherlock Holmes - Detective John Christie*

Haydon, it appeared, was an eminent bacteriologist sent by the English government to India specifically to deal with the plague at a time it was raging there. He said the only known antidote was dead germs and their by-products and he had at great trouble kept pure cultures for this purpose.

'Similar deadly germs are kept in every bacteriological laboratory in the world worthy of the name,' he said. The Health Department later confirmed it had known about the bacilli, but said it nevertheless supported the seizure.

■ The above is an edited version of a story in: *'Damn You, John Christie'- the Public Life of Australia's Sherlock Holmes* by John Lahey (State Library of Victoria, 1993) \$16.50 plus \$2.50 P&H.

### The Friends of St Kilda Cemetery Inc.

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