



Newsletter of the Friends of St Kilda Cemetery Inc.

Issue 8: September 2021

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Residents and Friends
of St Kilda Cemetery

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Please email above or phone Gabriel
Hermes on 0451 831 102

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For details, email info@foskc.org

AGM Saturday 16 October 2021
See details on page 8.

President's Word

Dear Valued Members

I hope you will enjoy our September Newsletter.

Unfortunately with COVID restrictions we were unable to conduct our tours. We were also planning an important event in October to mark the 125th anniversary of the death of Baron Ferdinand von Mueller, the designer of the Royal Botanic Gardens.

Our Election and Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 16 October at 2.00pm at the Prahran Mechanics Institute Library. Any member can join the Committee. Details of this important event are on page 8 and a Nomination Form and Proxy Form accompany this newsletter.

Membership subscriptions are due for 2021-2022.

Until the next Newsletter the FOSK Committee wishes our members and their families to remain safe and COVID free.

Gabriel Hermes
President

Important

Owing to ongoing uncertainty, the Baron Von Mueller event will not go ahead in October. A tentative date has been set in January 2022. More details to come.

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William Henry Gunson, Editor

by Claire Barton

In a shady pocket in St Kilda Cemetery's north west is a Celtic Cross with its characteristic nimbus or circle where the two parts of the cross intersect.

The grave, in Roman Catholic Compartment A, Grave 73A, memorialises William Henry Gunson and his family members, including his wife, Mary. The base of the gravestone includes these words: *Erected by the proprietors of the Advocate.*

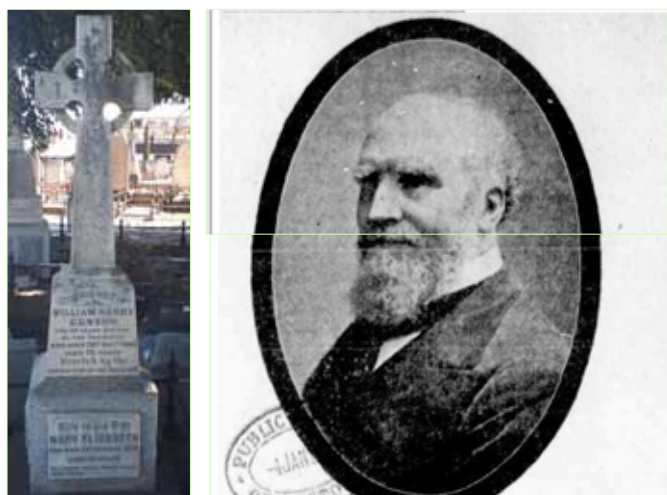
Who is Mr Gunson and what is his link with *The Advocate*, a weekly Catholic newspaper?

William Henry Gunson was born in Limerick, Ireland in 1828, the son Robert, a merchant who belonged to the Church of England. His mother was, however, of the Roman Catholic faith. William and his brother John were raised in their father's faith while his sister followed her mother's Catholicism. On reaching adulthood, both brothers separately converted to Catholicism.

The brothers Gunson migrated to Adelaide in 1852 where John Gunson KGG practised as a doctor and William started in his long career in journalism.

William subsequently relocated to Victoria where he worked on the *Daylesford Express*, *Ballarat Times* and *The Age* before starting as the first editor of *The Advocate*.

Two years after arriving in Australia, he married Mary Elizabeth Lynch on 24 October 1854. After several months of illness, William died on 28 December 1901 aged 73 years. A private funeral, on request, was conducted by Father T. Lynch. Mary passed away on 24 August 1898 aged 73.¹



Source: *The Advocate*, 4 January 1902, p. 20.

William was the first editor of *The Advocate*, which started publication on 1 February 1868. The owner S. V. Winter stated on page one of the first issue that

there is no journal in Victoria to which the large section of this community, who are Irish or Catholic can look for full and accurate news from Europe on topics of special interest to them . . . [and that the paper] will neither foster bigotry nor countenance social division; but preach a common Australian brotherhood, founded upon equal, civil and religious liberty to all.²

William has been variously described as a "good type of Irish gentleman, and cultural journalist",³ "of active and cheerful temperament",⁴ and "admired and even revered by his friends, of irreproachable and exemplary character".⁵

He was a contemporary of Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, Sir John O'Shannessy, "and others in those days when there were giants in the land".⁶

As a journalist, he was "of the older type of newspapermen, deliberate, accurate, solid, and never descended to the flashy sensationalism of a later day".⁷ Moreover, the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* describes him as "cultured and gifted, [maintaining] a scholarly literary style in his leading articles for 34years".⁸

The Advocate concluded its 1902 tribute thus
He has given good and faithful service for the Catholic cause of this country during a long editorial career of thirty-four years, and has gone to his grave deserving the deep gratitude of the people for whom he laboured.⁹

The inscription on William Henry Gunson's grave reflects this deep gratitude.

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Honouring Baron von Mueller

by Geoffrey Paterson

Sunday 10 October 2021 marks the 125 years since the passing of Baron von Mueller. This article traces steps taken to honour the Baron.

This article explores some ways in which Australians have honoured Baron Friedrich Jakob Heinrich von Mueller (1825–1896), chief botanist and inaugural director of the Melbourne's Botanic Gardens. It mainly considers steps taken in the creation of two monuments: the St Kilda Cemetery Grave Monument and the National Monument, as reported in Melbourne's daily newspapers.

Early discussions

The idea of a monument was raised in the Victorian Legislative Assembly on 12 November 1896, a month after von Mueller's passing. On this day, George Prendergast, Member for North Melbourne, initiated debate by asking: "Could not the Premier see his way to place himself in communication with the Premiers of the other colonies with a view to the erection of a national memorial to the late Baron von Mueller".

Alfred Deakin (Essendon and Flemington) supported this suggestion with "one modification" – as von Mueller had spent his time and employment in Victoria "no invitation to lend assistance need be transmitted to the Governments of the neighbouring colonies".

Later in the day John Rogers (South Yarra), and von Mueller's local member, took a different approach contending that Von Mueller's,

wonderful collection of 1,000,000 specimens would be a grand monument to the industry, genius, talents, and perseverance of Baron von Mueller, and it would form an object lesson to every man, woman, and child who visited the place where it was kept.¹

Four months later in March 1897, the Premier George Turner (St Kilda) reported he had authorised a suitable sum of money for a monument.²

The Grave Monument

Almost one year after this death, von Mueller's executors – Reverend W. M. Potter, Alexander Buttner MD, and Herman Buttner – wrote to *The Age* stating they were working towards erecting a 23-foot (seven metre) grey, highly polished granite monument

enclosed by an ornamental iron railing. The firm Chambers and Clutton would carry out the work. The executors appealed for donations to the Baron von Mueller Grave Monument Fund.³ Amongst the first to respond were Lady Janet Clarke and Australian flower painter Mrs Ellis Rowan.⁴ Later in the month, the Royal Horticultural Society also opened a fund.⁵

Donations from Australia and overseas kept being made and acknowledged in *The Age*. The sums ranged from £10 (from the Royal Geographical Society of London) to one farthing.⁶ Some donor comments were included with these announcements. The town clerk of Warrnambool, for example, acknowledged the role of marram grass introduction to prevent sea sand movement onto farmland.⁷ Mr E. F. Tregaskis spoke of von Mueller the person in these terms:



. . . consider during the mad rush for gold in the early days, and the intense struggle for commercial wealth which followed, the Baron, forsaking all inducements for personal advancement, devoted his life to science. Such a man is worthy of our highest respect and deepest gratitude.⁸

Forward one year, the executors are again writing to *The Age* stating they have raised half the sum required and to "crave space to make a further earnest appeal to all those admirers of [von Mueller's] genius and many virtues". Possible donors include councils, public bodies, scientific societies, one-time co-workers and young people.⁹

In 1899, three years after von Mueller's death, Reverend Potter reported the executors "are now, practically, in a position to discharge the baron's dying injunction with respect to his grave".¹⁰

In October 1901, the arrangements for the 26 November unveiling were announced with the Governor-General officiating.¹¹

National Monument

We have seen that early discussion considered a national monument. An early intimation of an earnest move for a national monument, that was "quite distinct" from the Grave Monument, was a meeting convened in the Melbourne Town Hall on 15 November 1897. At that meeting a committee was appointed to secure the establishment of some permanent memorial to commemorate the great services rendered by the late Baron von Mueller.¹²

The committee wished to secure sufficient funds for some form of statue and endowment of a medal, prize or scholarship in his name that recognises distinguished work in the special branches of science in which he, von Mueller, worked.¹³ The secretaries of the Fund were Professor of Biology at the University of Melbourne, Baldwin Spencer and Mr H. Wiesbaden. The Fund also received news from the Chief Secretary that the Cabinet agreed to grant £100 towards the National Memorial.¹³

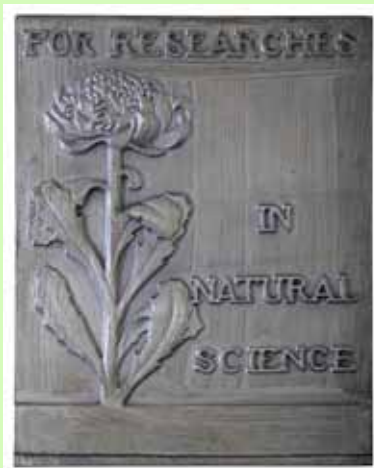
Over the ensuing couple of years, notices of donations for both funds appeared in the Melbourne papers.

By November 1901, the National Fund had around £500.¹⁴ In February of the following year, the National Fund's executive committee had decided on a medal awarded at intervals of not less than two years to "the author of the most important contribution to natural knowledge which shall be published within the British Dominions".¹⁵ The Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science was asked to take over the fund.¹⁶

The first Mueller Medal was awarded to Mr A. W. Howitt FGS for distinguished work in ethnology, geology and botany extending over forty years. The Medal was presented at a joint meeting of the Royal Society and the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria in the Society's Hall on 21 April 1904.¹⁷

The Mueller Medal has been awarded in rotation, in the fields of botany, zoology, anthropology and zoology, until 2006.¹⁸

The Mueller Medal



Dimensions: 55mm x 69 mm

Weight: >100 grams

Shape: Rectangle

Designer: Walter Baldwin Spencer

Material: Silver Plated Bronze

Description at left: Von Mueller sitting at desk, books open and holding a plant

Description at right: Waratah at left; a plaque is provided at the bottom for engraving the winner's name

Source: Museums Victoria Copyright Museums Victoria / CC BY (Licensed as Attribution 4.0 International)

Other tributes

There are other means by which we recall Baron von Mueller, the person and his work. For example, there is Mueller Hall and the National Herbarium, a bust in Birdwood Avenue and the journal *Muelleria* which is published by the National Herbarium. On a larger scale, over 4000 plants were named after von Mueller including the Forest Boronia or *Boronia muelleri* shown in this photograph.¹⁹



Boronia muelleri

Image Royal Botanic Gardens

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- ¹⁹ Angair Inc. Accessed at <http://angair.org.au/2-uncategorised/766-what-s-in-a-name-ferdinand-von-mueller>

Acknowledgements

Dr Gary Presland, Honorary Librarian, Field Naturalists Club of Victoria and Sally Stewart, Librarian, Royal Botanic Gardens for their assistance.

Thank you to the contributors to this Newsletter and to Genevieve for her proofreading.

John Hadfield, teacher and churchgoer

by Geoffrey Paterson

My attention was recently drawn to John Hadfield, a St Kilda resident for some 30 years in the later nineteenth century. On visiting his grave, pictured, I was interested to see two aspects of his life detailed there. One was his longevity as a teacher – 35 years is no mean feat. I noted also the quote from Psalm 127:2 which suggested that Mr Hadfield had church affiliations. I decided to delve further into his early life, his teaching career in St Kilda, his church life, and his funeral.



Gravestone at St Kilda Cemetery, Church of England Compartment B Grave 626

Early life

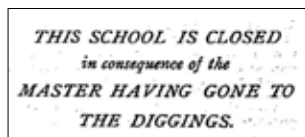
John Hadfield was born in Devizes, Wiltshire on 8 March 1827. He discovered his appetite for teaching in Sunday School and was reportedly an enthusiastic teacher. Indeed, his superintendent observed that if he went into teaching, he would be "eminently successful" at it. He trained at London's Barrow Road Training College from which he graduated with a first-class diploma. He was then appointed to the London School Board. On 17 September 1852, he married Maria Chapman, also a teacher, who was born in Camberwell, Surrey.

The Victorian goldrush did not immediately entice the Hadfields to emigrate but around October 1852, Mr and Mrs Hadfield and John's brother Benjamin sailed from Bristol on the *Clara Symes* arriving in Melbourne in February 1853. They first lived in the tent city on Emerald Hill, where they may have

been amongst the first inhabitants, before moving to a house in St Kilda.¹

Teaching in St Kilda

The family was not attracted to the goldfields so Mr Hadfield needed to start looking for employment in Melbourne. It happened that there was a Church of England school in Acland Street that belonged to Christ Church. However, there was no teacher and a sign, pictured, had been placed on the door.² Mr Hadfield applied for the position and the Denomination Schools Board appointed him as head teacher in 1853 remaining for 22 years.



After the passing of the 1872 Education Act, Mr Hadfield was appointed inaugural Head Teacher at the new Brighton Road State School No. 1479 where he soon became known as a progressive teacher.³ Maria Hadfield also taught at the school. Noteworthy innovations that were introduced in his time included a scholar's lending library with 200 volumes; free night classes that attracted some 100 mature-age students when secondary education was fee paying; establishment of a drum and fife band which achieved local fame; and a Cadet Corps which was considered one of the finest in Victoria. The school also held annual hospital collections which amassed £473 7s 9d over the first eleven years of the school's existence.⁴ Fine examination results were also attained; in 1886, for example, a 91.3 percentage was obtained and 98 students were awarded their certificates.⁵

John Hadfield was a man of strong personality who devoted his whole life to teaching.⁶ He endeavoured "at all times to imbue his pupils and subordinate teachers with the necessity of fully mastering the work before them".⁷ George Turner, St Kilda resident, future member of parliament and Premier, expressed his thoughts thus:

Many of our ratepayers now in prosperous circumstances, must recollect the care and attention paid to them in their young days, and in nearly every family, there are children who have received benefit under his fostering care.⁸

Mr Turner continued by suggesting a Hadfield Prize or plaque be established at the Brighton Road school. The latter is also mentioned by historian J. B. Cooper but its whereabouts at the school is today unknown.⁹

Church life

John Hadfield's involvement started in England in Sunday Schools. On arrival in Melbourne, he first became involved with Christ Church in Acland Street where he was involved for some thirty years in the Sunday School and also the choir.¹⁰ His later years were at St George's Presbyterian Church in Chapel Street where he was elected an elder in 1884 and was again involved in the choir.¹¹ St George's Jubilee Souvenir sums up John Hadfield as a man of strong personality, who was deeply interested in all the work of the Church, being very successful in training the Sunday School Choir. His death in 1888 was a great loss to the Church and to the community.¹²

His funeral

The *Telegraph* reported that 200 to 300 followed the hearse with 100 senior boys from the Brighton Road school leading the procession. The service was attended by St Kilda clergy and Robert Craig, senior inspector of schools. At the graveside mourners swelled to 600 with the scholars singing *The Sweet Bye and Bye*, the oaken coffin being strewn with bouquets.¹³

John Hadfield's death ended a productive sixty-one year life in schools and the church in England and Victoria.

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- ² J. B. Cooper, *The history of St Kilda, from its settlement to a city and after 1840 to 1939*, volume 1, p. 320.
- ³ R. Peterson, *A place of sensuous resort*, St Kilda Historical Society, 2009, chapter 34. Accessed at skhs.org.au/SKHSbuildings/
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- ⁶ *St George's Presbyterian Church, East St Kilda, 1876-1926, Jubilee souvenir book*, p. 25.
- ⁷ *Telegraph and St Kilda, Prahran, and South Yarra Guardian*, 1 September 1888, p. 4.
- ⁸ *Telegraph and St Kilda, Prahran, and South Yarra Guardian*, 1 September 1888, p. 6.
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- ¹¹ *St George's Presbyterian Church*, p. 25.
- ¹² *St George's Presbyterian Church*, p. 25.
- ¹³ *Telegraph and St Kilda, Prahran, and South Yarra Guardian*, 1 September 1888, p. 4.

The Cemetery 100 years ago



Robert Murray Smith, who died on 31 August 1921, was buried in St Kilda Cemetery in Church of England Compartment D, Grave 18. This article explores his early days, his public life and later years, and tributes paid by colleagues.

Early days

Robert Murray Smith was born on 29 October 1831 in Liverpool to Alexander Smith and his wife Sophia Sherbourne, daughter of Admiral Robert Murray. Educated at Repton, and Oriel College Oxford, he intended to read for the Bar but had to abandon his course when his father died in 1851. He sailed for Australia on the *South Carolina* and arrived in Melbourne in January 1854. Four years later, he married Jane Carmichael Strachan. They had one son and three daughters.¹

His public life

Murray Smith soon entered into partnership with merchant and commission agent John Strachan, and later joined Turnbull, Smith & Co. He became general manager of New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company Limited until 1880, and was a director of both the National Bank, between 1872 and 1882, and the Moama–Deniliquin Railway.²

In the 1860s, he was involved in the debate on protection which was conducted in a "lively fashion". He was in favour of free trade not surprisingly "having come from great free-trade county of Lancashire, and [being the] son of a man who had been an ardent Liberal and freetrader".³

His first unsuccessful attempt to enter parliament in Williamstown in 1865 was followed by being a City of Prahran councillor from 1867 and Mayor between 1870 and 1872. He was elected to the Legislative Assembly seat of St Kilda in 1873 before being defeated in 1877. In the following year he was elected to Boroondara in which he served until he resigned on 1 January 1882.⁴

The next four years saw him as Agent-General in London which coincided with significant issues relating to the Pacific and neighbouring islands. *The Argus* observed that Murray Smith "had the requisite commercial and political knowledge; he was in touch with cultured circles; [and] his tact served him with all".⁵ On his return, he held the seat of Hawthorn between 1894 to 1900.

Later years and funeral

The last twenty years of his life was spent confined to his Toorak home *Repton* where he was visited by a "large circle of friends whose society and visits he loved".⁶

The large attendance at his funeral reflected Murray Smith's involvement in the Victorian economy and society, as did the pallbearers: Sir Edward Miller, Bank of Victoria; Dr Alexander Leeper, National Gallery and Public Library; Mr W. J. T. Clarke, Charity Organisation Society; Sir Edward Mitchell, trustee of the estate of the late Edward Wilson; David Watterston, *The Argus*; Major H. Alan Currie, The Melbourne Club; Colin Templeton, Children's Hospital; and James Borrowman, Trustees, Executors and Agency Co.⁷

Looking back

The recollections of contemporaries provide further details of Robert Murray Smith. *Table Talk*, for example, observed

there has been very few English University Dons in the hurly-burly of Australian politics, and of the number Murray Smith did more than any other to maintain the high ideal of culture and sense of public service in rather unfavourable surroundings.⁸

Parliamentarian Sir Alexander Peacock saw him as a "model parliamentarian"⁹ while Premier Mr H. S. W. Lawson described a "notable man whose graceful style as a speaker and whose keen debating powers won the admiration of members of all parties".¹⁰

Robert Murray Smith's death marked the end of some sixty years of service by a "veteran statesman and sterling gentleman".¹¹

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 - ⁴ G. Serle, Smith, Robert Murray; Parliament of Victoria, Robert Murray Smith. Accessed at <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/component/fabrik/details/24/857>
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 - ⁶ *The Argus*, 1 September 1921, p. 6.
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 - ⁹ *The Herald*, 1 September 1921, p. 6.
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 - ¹¹ *The Argus*, 2 September 1921, p. 6.
- Image: Mr Murray Smith by E. Gilks. 1874. State Library Victoria Accession H31555/53.



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Notice of Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the Twenty-first Annual General Meeting of Friends of St Kilda Cemetery Inc will be held by Zoom on Saturday 16 October 2021 at 2.00pm.

Please RSVP to Gabriel Hermes by 9 October at gabrielhermes@live.com or mobile 0451 831 102. On receipt of your RSVP you will be sent a Zoom invitation that contains the meeting link and phone number.

AGENDA

1.0 Apologies

To receive apologies and proxy forms from absent members.

2.0 Minutes of last Annual General Meeting

To confirm the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting.

Motion: That the minutes be adopted as a true and accurate record of the last Annual General Meeting held on 14 December 2020.

3.0 President's Report

To receive and consider the President's Report.

Motion: That the President's Report be accepted.

4.0 Accounts and Reports

To receive and consider the financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2021.

Motion: That the financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2021 be received and approved.

5.0 Election of Office Bearers and Committee Members

President; Vice President; Treasurer; Secretary; Committee (three vacancies).

Any Other Business

Speaker: Julianne Spring

Following the AGM, Julianne Spring will speak on the life of John Butler Cooper and how one of the critical pieces to solving a family mystery lies in St Kilda Cemetery.

Julie's family has a long association with the Prahran and St Kilda areas. Her maternal great grandfather, John Butler Cooper lived in Prahran and Elsternwick, and wrote a number of municipal histories including that of St Kilda and Prahran. A journalist and historian by trade John Butler Cooper's personal story and character has intrigued many; as has his close association with the 19th century investigative journalist John Stanley James, better known as *The Vagabond*.

Please note

1. Nominations for Officers and Committee positions should be made on the appropriate form. These forms should be returned at least seven days before the meeting date to Gabriel Hermes at gabrielhermes@live.com or posted to the above post office box. Gabriel's mobile is 0451 831 102.
2. Proxy forms are available from Gabriel Hermes.

Members who renew their membership before the meeting commences are eligible to vote.