Daredevils of the Racetrack

*B*efore the popularity of Aussie Rules football and cricket, there was a time when those daredevils of the racetrack, pint sized jockeys, were once sporting idols. And few jockeys were idolised more than the legendary Robert ("Call me Bobbie") Lewis (1878-1947), the third youngest of eleven children to Thomas Lewis, a miner and Martha *nèe* Miller. Along with Harry White, Lewis has won more Melbourne Cups than any other rider with *The Victory* (1902); *Patrobas* (1915); *Artilleryman* (1919) and *Trivalve* (1927).

The year 1895 was to be one of mixed fortune for Lewis. As a promising young jockey, he won his first Melbourne metropolitan race. But the year was also marred by the tragic death of his elder brother Charles John Lewis (1867-95). Born at Clunes, Victoria, Charles became a jockey at a young age. He rode on the racecourses of country New South Wales and later in South Australia with varying success. Continuing as a jockey in Melbourne he also became a trainer.

Kindly provided by Anne Johnson

It was the fatal combination of his love of horse riding and overconfidence that was to bring about Charles' untimely death at the age of 28. For there was something about the horse *Circassian King* that compelled Lewis to accept the ride in the Handicap Steeplechase at Caulfield on Saturday 17 August 1895. Lewis had not ridden in a steeplechase for 7 years. According to Kevin Gates of the Australian Racing Museum, Bobbie Lewis tried to dissuade his brother from accepting the mount, but it was to be in vain.

In the seven-horse field, *The Argus* reported *"all went well in the race until the third obstacle, a post-and-rail fence situated at the turn into the straight, was reached"*. *Moondah*, it was reported was a horse given to "hanging in" and accidentally swerved hitting Lewis as the jump was being made. In the ensuing fall, Lewis *"pitched on his head"* causing a fatal laceration of the brain. He was rushed by ambulance to the casualty-room and examined by Dr. Joske who *"held out not the slightest hope"* and he never regained consciousness. His body was removed to his mother's residence in Grace Avenue Malvern where a post-mortem was carried out.

The incident was contradicted by fellow jockey Thomas Darby of North Brighton, riding on *Essand* a few lengths behind Lewis who testified seeing *"Moondah run down the fence [and] hit Tayforth and Tayforth hit Circassian King"*. James Malone of Fitzroy, a hotel keeper and jockey on *Tayforth* insisted this was not the case indicating that *"Moondah got over the fence and Circassian King also but he landed into Moondah who cannoned on to Tayforth both horses falling"*. However, the Coroner, Samuel Candler concurred with both jockeys that the incident was purely accidental. He found that Lewis *"died from injuries received from his horse falling with him...the occurrence was accidental and no blame attached to any person"*.

Grave of Charles Lewis, CofE "C" 3B.

Lewis was buried in St. Kilda Cemetery. His name is commemorated on the Fallen Jockeys memorial at Caulfield racecourse, a poignant reminder of the risks taken by these forgotten sporting idols. *(Source: The Argus 19 Aug 1895; Inquest VPRS 244/PO 646 1895/1010; ADB Vol 10 Lat-Ner (RL); Information from Lois Comeadow & Kevin Gates; http://users.ncable.net.au/~jburrell/gen/lewis/lew_mil.html)*

Equestrian Tour

Sunday 6 November 2005 at 2:00pm

Spring is synonymous with racing in Melbourne. This tour will visit graves with an equestrian theme. Come along and hear stories of steeplechases, stallions and steeds as well as the tragic accounts of a number of 19th century jockeys.

Forgotten Cemeteries of Melbourne

*I*n part two of this special three part series, we continue our search for the forgotten cemeteries of Melbourne.

Mickleham Methodist Church Cemetery (c1858-c83) (Melways Ref 366 C12) - To the north of Melbourne on the outskirts of the ever expanding metropolis are the sad sorry remains of the Mickleham (Methodist) Churchyard Cemetery. The cemetery is located on the north side of the Mt. Ridley Road (made famous in recent times by the Korp saga) and covers an area of about an acre. It is situated amidst the remnants of what once was an indigenous redgum forest. Since a heritage study was conducted in 1998, hobby farms surround the cemetery and a fence has been erected in recent times. The locality was once a thriving district of farmers with a strong Wesleyan faith. In 1854, one such local farmer Thomas Langford sold a piece of his land to the Methodist Church and the following year the first chapel was believed to have been built. (The remnants of the base of what may have been a chapel can be seen near the south-west corner). Research has confirmed that twenty interments occurred between 1858 and 1883 with another five unconfirmed from oral sources. Names represented include Chambers, Foxton, Langford, Parnell, Sidebottom, Thompson and Williams.

Looking north-west showing cows grazing in the Mickleham Cemetery

Three graves each surrounded by cast iron railings on bluestone foundations are all that remain standing upright whilst another two monuments (Chambers-Thompson and Parnell) are detached from their base. Of interest is the monument to Priscilla (d 30 Oct 1863), George (d 29 Oct 1876) and Thirza Parnell (d 27 Nov 1878). The lower portion of the inscription imbedded in the earth notes the name of the monumental mason as "S. Wines 26 George St Fitzroy". As with the Thomastown Methodist Churchyard Cemetery, the graves all face towards the east where an Italian Cypress tree (*Cupressus sempervirens)* stands showing signs of distress. If ever there was a greater insult to the pioneers who lie buried in the cemetery and who went through the trials of migrating to a distant land, it's the ignominy of having to share their final resting place with grazing cows. Surely the pioneers of Mickleham deserve better.

Beaumaris Methodist Church Cemetery (1855-65) (Melways Ref 86 G5) - If ever there was a more pitiful story of a cemetery, few could match the history of this Methodist churchyard in the bayside suburb of Beaumaris. Until 1995, the cemetery was not only lost, but forgotten until its story was told by Shirley Joy in "The Search for the Beaumaris Cemetery, Victoria 1855-1865". Located on the south-west corner of Bickford Court and Balcombe Road, the original area was approximately one and a half acres. It is now covered by three houses facing Balcombe Road and four houses in Bickford Court. In January 1855, Stephen Charman gifted the land for a Methodist church and cemetery which was the first burial ground beyond those in the Brighton district. The sad fact is that of the 128 burials that took place in the decade after the opening in 1855, only one person, Elizabeth (Sarah) Gott (d 1861) appears to have been exhumed for reinterment in the nearby Old Cheltenham Cemetery in January 1871. The rest lie as the casualties of progress. After the church building was relocated to Langwarrin in 1893, the cemetery was left languishing being subject to vandalism, grazing cows and circus animals. In 1954 the Methodist Church applied to the Moorabbin City Council to have the land subdivided for sale. By this time, with so few surviving monuments, there would have been little visual evidence that it had ever been a pioneer cemetery.

...to be continued. ✎

George Lyon of Beechworth

By Noelle Mackay and Dr. John Nelson, descendants of George Lyon.

George Judah Lyon was born in New York, U.S.A on 25 September 1833 to Isaac George and Elizabeth Lyon. His father ran a variety store at 139 State Street. In the same month he turned 20, George arrived in Australia aboard the *City of Norfolk* and headed for Castlemaine. He worked for the *Mount Alexander Mail* for a while before Mr John Sitch Clark encouraged him to move to Beechworth where he was employed in the offices of the *Constitution*.

During the 1850s, there was a very talented family of professional performers based in Kilmore who were travelling the country under the direction of their father, Joseph Chambers. During one of their visits, George, a popular young man fell in love with their young daughter, Wilhelmina (d 1921) who returned his feelings. Joseph and Jennet Chambers along with Joseph jnr and Wilhelmina, aged one year, had emigrated from London in 1841, aboard the *Alexander*.

"In short, if he was energetic as regards his own business, he was public-spirited as regards the welfare of the district, and one admirable trait of his character was that he was thoroughly cosmopolitan".

George and Wilhelmina were married in April 1859 at the Schoolhouse in Kilmore by Rev. W. Singleton because Christ Church Anglican was still under construction. A year later their first daughter, Amy was born, followed by George Lincoln (d 1864). Between 1865 and 1879 they produced six more children - Walter, Ada, Edith, William, Wilhelmina (Mina), and Martha (Matty.)

In 1866, he commenced his own business as a newsagent and tobacconist in Ford Street, Beechworth. He was responsible for obtaining the agency for the *Argus*, which was at that time a very lucrative business.

Three years later he bought the Beechworth Cordial and Aerated Water Manufactory in Loch Street from Mr E. H. Dunn. He carried on this business for some time with a fair amount of success but believing that the water passing through the slate strata towards the head of

George Lyon

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Spring Creek would be more suitable for the purposes required, he moved the factory to that locality and pushed forward the business with redoubled energy, emphasising the Soda Water. His cordials included Ginger Wine, Peppermint, Lemon Syrup, Raspberry, Cloves and Cherry Cordial. He later added sauces, including his own Bogong Sauce.

The amateur theatrical spirit was kept well alive with George and Wilhelmina in the town and performances were frequently given of an exceptionally high standard. The *Ovens and Murray Advertiser* reported on a performance of the Shakespeare reading "Seven Ages" given by George at St. Georges Hall to raise funds for the Beechworth Academy. It was met with hearty applause.

Finding that he could not devote the required attention to the newsagency, he sold it to Mr A. W. Foster and then added a brewery to his premises beside Spring Creek.

In 1873, 20 years after arriving in the Colony, he was naturalised. There was a strong American presence in the Colony at that time and George Lyon took a prominent part in organising Fourth of July celebrations.

In 1876, he built the Spring Creek Brewery and then added a dwelling, stables and fowl house.

He was always ready to be in the forefront of any movement which would benefit the district or develop its resources and when the United Shire of Beechworth was constituted, he was elected a Councillor from 1877 to 1881, and gained great credit by the effective manner in which he discharged the duties. He was philanthropic in a marked degree and was a warm supporter of helping to relieve human suffering. He subscribed liberally to the Church of England, of which he was a member, the Benevolent Society, the Public Library, and was also a Committee Member of the Ovens and District Hospital and the Agricultural Society. He was a keen sportsman and member of the Beechworth Racing Club Committee. He is credited with initiating the idea of the Boxing Day Sports which were held in Beechworth for many years.

His business interests extended to the Rocky Mountain Gold Mining Co., and he was one of the first shareholders of Beechworth Pottery. He warmly supported the railway extension. He was one of the promoters of the Gas Co. and in 1881 the streets of Beechworth were first lit with gas.

(Continued from page 3)

He bought a second house in Kerferd Street which he rented to Mr J. Stewart, and in 1885 he sold his brewery and house and moved to Windsor, in Melbourne to be near his eldest daughter, Amy and her husband William Young Nelson and young family. In 1890, George and Wilhelmina established a boarding house, *Idthorpe* - Marlton Crescent, St. Kilda which was becoming quite a popular place. The pier saw many ships come and go, including ones containing Royalty, and trips to the Mornington Peninsula were also a highlight.

It was also in 1890 that their youngest daughter, Martha, (Matty), died aged 10 years and a year later, George Lyon himself passed away aged 57, from an apoplectic fit, to which he was prone. He was buried in the St. Kilda Cemetery in Other Denominations "C" 56 with his beloved Matty. Wilhelmina lived until she was 79, and was buried there too in 1921. Their infant great-grandson, Edward George Nelson (Baby Teddy), son of George Lyon Nelson and Elizabeth (Lil.) Docy Bull is also in the same grave. ✍

Lyon family grave (OD "C" 56)

PEOPLE WHO MAKE ST. KILDA GREAT

*I*n 1875, Henry Figsby Young (1845-1925) and Thomas Joshua Jackson (1833-1901, Boroondara Cemetery) partners in Sparrow's Hotel at St. Kilda took over the license of the Prince's Bridge Hotel renaming it Young & Jackson's. Thus, a Melbourne institution was born. Though the partnership between these two Irish ex-gold diggers was to dissolve in 1890, Young continued until he sold his interests in 1914. As an ardent art collector, Young was responsible for the purchase of *Chloe* from the estate of Sir Thomas Fitzgerald in 1908 for £800. Little was he to know how much Melbourne came to love the painting. Young died on 29 September 1925, though there is no entry on the on-line burial register. ✍

Family grave of Henry Figsby Young

WHEN DRAG CAME TO ST. KILDA

*T*he highlight of 2005 for the Friends of St. Kilda Cemetery was undoubtedly the 150th anniversary celebration held in June. And what a day it was. So what better way than to reflect on the successful year than this picture of Cr. Darren Ray, Mayor of City of Port Phillip. To quote the press release, *"Cr. Ray is getting into the spirit of the occasion by wearing the mayoral robes and chains of the former City of St. Kilda - a long black, wool serge garment with dark brown lapin fur trim. 'It's the closest I'll get to wearing drag during my mayoralty,' he said"*. Tight security was organised on the day to ensure the safety of the mayoral robes and chains which had not been worn since council amalgamation in 1994. The Friends are grateful for the ongoing support of Carmel Shute and the City of Port Phillip. ✍

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NEW MEMBERS

*W*e extend a warm welcome to our newest members who have joined since August:

Rod Beveridge of West Coburg, Linela Climie of Hampton, Richard Kostraby of Altona, Cheryl Meier of Chelsea, Jennifer Strover of Northcote and Gerard Vaughan of Oakleigh.

We wish all our Friends and their families, a safe and happy festive season and a prosperous and healthy 2006. ✍