



# Cemetery Conversations

The Newsletter of the Friends of St Kilda Cemetery Inc.

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## Murder Most Foul

St. Kilda Cemetery is the last resting place for at least ten murder victims. One of the best known stories is that of Doleen Maude La Barte *née* Robb whose exquisite monument may be found to the immediate left upon entering the cemetery from Dandenong Road.

Doleen was shot by her husband, Major Thomas Butler La Barte in December 1920 at their home at Moss Vale, NSW. The tragedy was magnified by the death of Constable Frederick William Mitchell of the Moss Vale Police who was also shot by Major La Barte whilst attempting to apprehend him.

Constable Richard Johnston is another police officer who was shot in the execution of his duty. Constable Johnston of the St. Kilda Police was 36 years of age when he was shot on Sunday 12 October 1902. The Constable was at home, bathing his infant son, when a neighbour came by seeking his assistance after an attempted assault of her eight year old daughter.

The Constable took his bicycle and went in search of the offender. After pedalling through the streets of Elwood, Constable Johnston pulled up alongside the man. As he did so, the man took a revolver from his pocket and shot the Constable who fell from his bicycle. Constable Johnston remounted his bicycle and took off in pursuit of the man. Pedalling furiously and approaching Brighton Road, the Constable eventually lost control and fell to the ground, dead.

While this was occurring, the murderer put the revolver in his pocket and attempted to slip away. Some bystanders took notice and followed the man up Chapel Street. Nearing Rosamond Street, the murderer was approached by two constables who rushed to arrest him. The offender took a knife and stabbed himself before taking the revolver from his pocket and shooting himself dead.

At this point, the identity of the offender was still to be established. The fact that he was in possession of a "burglar's kit" suggested that he was a hardened crimi-

nal. However, none of the Melbourne detectives knew him. There was a suspicion that the man might have been George Shaw, who was a suspect in the shooting of Constable Denis Guilfoyle at Redfern, NSW in July 1902.

As fingerprint identification was unknown in Australia at this time, a detective who knew Shaw was dispatched from Sydney to identify the body.

However, Detective Mitchell confounded the local police when he said that the body was not that of Shaw. As a result, the body was placed in a formalin bath while attempts were made at identification.

The matter was still unresolved when the funeral of Constable Johnston occurred. The funeral was very large with the police contingent alone numbering some 300 men.

Eventually, it was the Deputy Governor of Sydney's Darlinghurst Gaol who identified the body as George Shaw, beyond any doubt. Shaw had a lengthy criminal record and had been in and out of prisons in NSW and Victoria. In 1885, he had been involved in an £11,000 robbery in Collingwood but was later to secure his release by testifying against his co-offenders. In doing so, he would have incurred the wrath of the underworld and this may have accounted for his decision to shoot himself rather than face apprehension.

On Sunday 22 March 1903, a memorial to Constable Johnston, paid for by his police comrades, was unveiled by the Chief Commissioner. 🌹



Grave of Richard Johnston

Constable Johnston's grave is just one of those that will be visited on our tour "Murder Most Foul and other Tragic Tales" to be held on Sunday 17 September 2006 at 2:00 pm. 🌹

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## Forgotten Cemeteries of Melbourne

In the final part of this special series, we continue our search for the forgotten cemeteries of Melbourne.

**Yarra Bend (Metropolitan Lunatic) Asylum Cemetery (c1850s-c1925)** (Melways Ref 2D G7) – Yarra Bend was the principal institution for the insane in Melbourne for many decades and was established on 5 October 1848 near the junction of the Merri and Yarra rivers. It continued to operate until 1 September 1925 when the remaining patients were transferred to the new Mont Park Psychiatric Hospital. The Asylum was a self-sufficient village so it was no surprise that within its walls, lay God's own acre; the burial ground was not likely to have been established until after May 1853 when the Melbourne General Cemetery opened. The exact location and the number of interments that took place is open to conjecture, but David Weatherill has suggested as many as 1,200 former inmates were interred (many later exhumed) within what is today one of the finest Melbourne recreation grounds. If indeed this was the case, the cemetery would likely have consisted of more than 400 graves. According to information from a Parks Victoria Ranger, the cemetery was located along the banks of the Yarra, on what is today a practice fairway of the Yarra Bend public golf course. The 18-hole golf course was opened in two stages in 1932 and 1934 with the existing American-styled Golf Club House completed in May 1936. And no more idyllic a place could one could ask to rest after "thy day of work is done". River Red gums stand majestically in this tranquil, peaceful spot. If only the exact precise location of the cemetery was known.

**Greensborough Cemetery (c1861-1963)** (Melways Ref 2O J1) – Like the Old Heidelberg Cemetery, Greensborough is another example of a cemetery that stands defiant, refusing to yield to the march of progress. Though closed to burials, the Greensborough Cemetery is now 'managed' by the local Banyule Council, though in reality, is under the loving care of local stalwart Noel Withers. Noel has done much to prevent the cemetery from extinction through the upkeep of the cemetery and by compiling a list of burials that can be viewed on a mounted board. The cemetery was for most of its life a private burial ground to many early settlers of the district and is located on the corner of Hailes and Jessop Streets, Greensborough just a short distance from the thriving local shopping strip. To the north, bordering Hailes Street is the Hurstbridge railway line, and it is believed that the cemetery extended as far as this point, when in 1911 the Railways Department purchased part of the land. The earliest recorded interment according to Noel is Mary Ann Limmer in 1861. Three years later, William Poulter, a local settler donated the land and the cemetery officially opened in March 1875 by which time it is believed as many as 20 burials had taken place. The remaining area is approximately half an acre surrounded on two sides by suburban houses and can be freely accessed at all hours. Vandalism is evident, though not rife. There are 53 monuments still surviving in various degrees of condition, and all bar one (the Roy grave) face in the traditional easterly direction. Probably due to Noel's efforts to upkeep the cemetery, three rare sandstone monuments – in-

cluding the oldest in the cemetery, that of Elizabeth Aldridge d 30 Jan 1864 aged 34 years – have each separately been placed upright on top of polish granite slabs. What strikes the visitor is the burial ground is very much like a typical cemetery, including monuments to two Great War veterans (Tpr 351 William Thompson 4ALH and Bmdr 2592 John Carse 14FAB) with their Commonwealth War Graves commissioned monuments. Stonemasons represented in the cemetery include Corben, Sherwin, G. Dawe and J. Williams of Purcell Street, North Melbourne. According to David Weatherill, the cemetery closed to further burials on 30 August 1978; the last burial being in 1963. In 2004, the Banyule Cemetery Trust, that is responsible for the cemetery requested the Minister of Human Services to reopen the cemetery to owners of existing graves. Following the deaths and cremation at Fawkner Crematorium of Albert Richards on 1 April 2005 and his wife, Bertha Florence Richards on 12 May 1993, their ashes were interred in an existing family grave in the cemetery. This is one suburban Melbourne cemetery that is not going to be forgotten.

### *Going, but not forgotten....*

**Oakleigh Pioneer Memorial Park (Cemetery) (1860-1960)** (Melways Ref 69 G7) and **Will Will Rook (Broadmeadows) Pioneer Memorial Park (Cemetery)** (Melways Ref 7 B9) – An amendment to the *Cemeteries Act* in 1974 saw these two pioneer suburban cemeteries eventually converted into memorial parks thus sealing their fate that will eventually see them gone in time. But they won't be forgotten with efforts made to preserve their history for future genealogists. In the case of Oakleigh where over 2,200 burials took place, the cemetery is under the care of the Oakleigh Pioneer Park Advisory Committee.


### *Defying the march of progress...*

**St. Andrew's Church of England Cemetery, Brighton (1844-92)** (Melways Ref 67 D11) – One of just four remaining churchyard cemeteries in Melbourne, until the opening of the nearby Brighton General Cemetery in October 1855, St. Andrew's was the major burial ground for the district. The first burial took place in 1844 and there have been over 300 interments.

**Northcote (German) Cemetery, Northcote (1861-1971)** (Melways Ref 30 G8) – Established by a group of early German settlers, the one acre Northcote Cemetery was established in May 1861. It was closed in 1908 to new right-of-burial holders and around 200 burials have taken place, the last in 1971. Located in Separation Street, the cemetery continues to defy plans to be converted to a memorial park.

### *Gone and truly forgotten...*

**Wesleyan Burial Ground, Brighton (c1850s)** – This Brighton churchyard cemetery is an enigma shrouded in mystery. That it existed is evident by the number of death certificates (Bennet Johns 1855; Isabella Dawson 1855; John Stimson 1855; and Elizabeth Silvester 1855) which all record "Wesleyan (Burial) Ground, Brighton". Its location has puzzled historians for years with the most likely site being the Uniting church on the corner of New and Allee Street.

*(Acknowledgements: Geoff Austin, Rod Beveridge, Shirley Joy and David W. Weatherill)* 



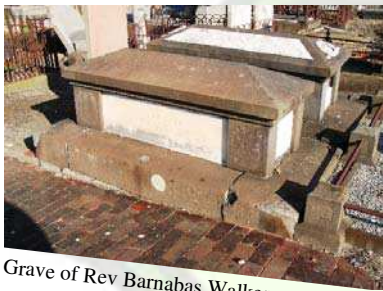
# Profiles of the Past: The Rev Barnabas Shaw Walker

Story by Ian Ross Walker, great-grandson of Barnabas Walker.

**B**arnabas Shaw Walker (1833-1878) was one of seven children born to devout Wesleyans, John and Maria Walker née Dewhurst who arrived in Sydney from Britain aboard the *Mary Hope* in 1827.

They settled in Parramatta where Barnabas was born in 1833. John Walker became a successful merchant and Barnabas, after completing his Bathurst Grammar School education, managed his father’s business in Bathurst, New South Wales. This administrative and managerial experience was to serve him well in later life it seems.

Although very successful within the business, religion was his calling and he was accepted to the Wesleyan Church as a probationer. During probation years, one was not permitted to marry but he did so and was compelled to complete training through the Church of England. He was ordained in 1854 and was the first Minister appointed to



Grave of Rev Barnabas Walker

Pentridge (later Coburg) and his circuit included the sparsely populated Eltham, Research, Kangaroo Ground, St. Andrews, Healesville, Marysville and Lilydale areas.

Without doubt, he was a man of huge energy and capacity, attributes which were to lead to an early death.

He married Mary Jane Rodda in 1856, “in the schoolroom Castlemaine” (per Wedding Certificate), she being 17 and he 25. They had 14 children, born in Sydney, North Melbourne, Gisborne, Maryborough, Yackandandah, Collingwood and Prahran, reflecting his postings. Several died as infants and at least six children predeceased Barnabas. Upon Barnabas’ death at age 45, he left a widow aged 39 and eight children ranging from 16 months to 18 years.

One prominent city posting was St. Philip’s, Hoddle Street, Collingwood where it is recorded that his enormous energies were applied to the completion of the unfinished church and the construction of the magnificent two-storey bluestone Manse which still stands. (Sadly, the church was destroyed by fire during the 1980s and later demolished – a new, modern building was completed in 2005).

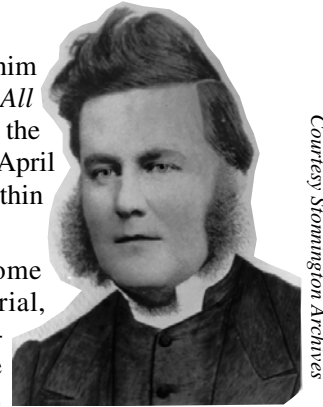
Although not well, he then applied his energies to the then dwindling parish of St. Matthew’s, High Street, Prahran where he was appointed in 1875 and where he was well received after his strenuous efforts, and personality, were recognised and appreciated. He was instrumental in the construction of that Church on its present site, which

firstly necessitated a change in state legislation, which he motivated.

The workload was too much for him and upon announcing the Hymn “*All Glory, Laud and Honour*” from the pulpit on Palm Sunday on 14 April 1878, he collapsed and died within hours.

Parishioners erected a handsome “Malmsbury bluestone” memorial, constructed by “Mr Brown of Carlton” and he was interred within the grave - Church of England “B” 158 - donated by Judge Fellows, which had been reserved for the Judge.

Press cuttings of the day provide lengthy accounts of the funeral, attended by over 700 people. 🐾



The Energetic Minister - The Rev Barnabas Shaw Walker (1833-1878)

Courtesy Stomington Archives

## Committee Chit Chat

**T**he Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the year 2005-06 took place on Sunday 27 August. Members of the old Committee were returned for 2006-07. A vacancy still exists on the Committee for an “ordinary committee member”. If you’re interested in playing a role in the organisation, contact Geoff Austin on (03) 9527 2387 or gba@melbpc.org.au.

The financial results for 2005-06 were very pleasing. In the accounts which were presented at the AGM, a net surplus of \$1,129.10 was recorded, contrasting with a deficit of \$1,062.47 for the previous year. Income from cemetery walks and book sales increased substantially in 2005-06 while expenses (especially insurance, printing and postage) were reduced. As at 30 June 2006, funds in the Friends bank accounts totalled \$7,749.53 and after allowing for liabilities, the total equity of the organisation stood at \$7,332.43 (up from \$6,206.33 as at 30 June 2005).

Following the AGM, those in attendance were treated to some wonderful images of Novodivechy Cemetery, Moscow. Many thanks to Elizabeth Hore and Geoff Austin for sharing their photos.

A little birdie tells us that our newsletter editor, Travis M. Sellers, has become engaged. We congratulate Travis and Vivienne, on this wonderful news and wish them the best for their future together. As a consequence of Travis’ engagement, we are now searching for a new editor for the newsletter. If you are familiar with MS Publisher and would like to have a go at arranging the newsletter, please contact Geoff Austin on (03) 9527 2387 or gba@melbpc.org.au. Remember, Rupert Murdoch had to start somewhere!

Finally, we are delighted to learn of the establishment and incorporation of a kindred group, the Friends of Boroondara (Kew) Cemetery Inc. If you’re looking for a forthcoming cemetery activity, why not support this newly formed group? 🐾



## The Mysterious Disappearance of John Fairweather

*Chris Laskowski has been busy researching early burials in the Keilor Cemetery. The cemetery celebrates its 150th anniversary this year. In this article Chris writes about the early history of Keilor and whets our appetite for the forthcoming tour.*

The land chosen as the site for the Keilor Cemetery lies just above the deep Maribyrnong River Valley and the village of Keilor where the discovery of gold in the 1850s transformed this quiet rural landscape into a busy centre of commerce.

Cemetery plans based on a rectangular design were drawn up in 1854 but later abandoned in favour of a more interesting oval layout set out over an area of 10 acres.

The first recorded burial at Keilor was that of a nine year old girl Ellen Blanche Bonfield who died of Synochus at Emerald Hill in 1856. Ellen's family later moved to Keilor and became prominent members of the community.

The original Keilor Cemetery burial register disappeared in the 1920s leaving many burials unaccounted for in the current register. Death certificates purchased by funds raised on my cemetery tours have filled in some of the gaps.

My October tour will take you back to 1867 when an elderly English farm labourer named John Fairweather mysteriously disappeared from Ball's farm near Keilor. As we travel around the cemetery you will hear the stories of people who lived in Keilor at the time and who will recount what they knew of John's disappearance. You may even meet some of them and hear their stories first-hand.

Keilor's history as a market gardening and farming area is reflected in its often plain and simple pioneer headstones. However the life stories of these everyday men and women are nevertheless full of all the drama and tragedy you would encounter in any of today's TV soaps. 🌹

### NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to two new members who have joined since May:

*Ruth Byrne of St. Kilda East and  
Tony Michael of Kew East.*

New members are always welcome. 🌹

Have an interest in the Boroondara General Cemetery?

## Friends of Boroondara (Kew) Cemetery Inc.

*The Boroondara Cemetery is a heritage listed Cemetery of state significance renowned for its garden beauty and opulent monuments.*

A new not-for-profit community group has formed to raise the profile of the Cemetery.

The Group meets monthly and welcomes people with an interest to come along and attend.

To learn more about the group, visit [www.fobkc.org](http://www.fobkc.org)  
email [info@fobkc.org](mailto:info@fobkc.org) or ring  
03 9817 4896 / 03 9817 3717.



## Forthcoming Activities

### Murder Most Foul and Other Tragic Tales Sunday 17 September 2006 at 2:00pm

Hear stories of murder, mayhem and other tragic tales on this walk through St. Kilda Cemetery.

### Keilor Cemetery Tour Sunday 1 October 2006 at 2:00pm

Keilor Cemetery celebrates its 150th anniversary in 2006. In 1867, an old man named John Fairweather went missing from Ball's farm near Keilor. Find out what happened to John as the lovely Christine Laskowski takes us on a tour of pioneers living in Keilor at the time. Keilor Cemetery is located on the corner of Cemetery Road and Ely Court (Melways 15 C9). Numbers are strictly limited and pre-booking is required by ringing 03 9531 6832. Tour cost is \$7.00. (NB - No member discount).

### Steeplechases, Stallions and Steeds Sunday 5 November 2006 at 2:00pm

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

### Office Bearings and Contacts

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