St. Kilda—150 Years of Local Government

*T*he 150th anniversary of the establishment of local government in St. Kilda is celebrated in 2007.

Initially, the Municipal District of St. Kilda was created in 1855 although the first Council did not meet until March 1857 in a room adjoining the Junction Hotel. The Municipal District of St. Kilda was short-lived becoming the Borough of St. Kilda in 1864. Finally, on 2 December 1890, the Borough of St. Kilda was elevated to the status of a City. Local government amalgamations in 1994 saw the forced merger of the cities of Port Melbourne, South Melbourne and St. Kilda to become the City of Port Phillip.

At least thirty former St. Kilda mayors, and many more councillors and municipal officials, are buried in St. Kilda Cemetery. Those buried in the Cemetery include Benjamin Cowderoy (the first Chairman of the Municipal District) and Brice Frederick Bunny (the last Chairman of the Municipal District of St. Kilda and by default, the first Mayor of the Borough of St. Kilda).

> *"At least thirty former St. Kilda mayors, and many more councillors and municipal officials are buried in St. Kilda Cemetery".*

Other notable St. Kilda mayors interred include Sir George Turner (Victoria's first Australian born Premier), Captain Albert Jacka VC and the long standing councillor and mayor Edward O'Donnell.

In this article we look at the lives of a number of St .Kilda's notable local government officials.

Benjamin Cowderoy - Church of England "A" 321A

Chairman of the Municipal District of St. Kilda (1857-59 & 1860-62). Councillor of the Municipal District of St. Kilda (1857-64) and Councillor of the Borough of St. Kilda (1864-65)

Cowderoy was born in Reading, England, on 22 January 1812 and arrived in Melbourne at the end of 1852. He shortly afterwards formed the Victorian Freehold Land Society with Frederick Sargood and Thomas Fulton.

Cowderoy became the inaugural Chairman of the Municipal District of St. Kilda on 11 March 1857 and retired as a councillor in 1866. It is said that his classical education enabled him to design the St. Kilda Council's crest and select a motto, *aura favente feror* (born on a favouring breeze). He was a founder of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce and later became its secretary. At the time of his death on 1 October 1904, he was one of the oldest Justices of the Peace in Victoria. He served for a time as a trustee of the St. Kilda General Cemetery.

Brice Frederick Bunny - Church of England "B" 686

Chairman of the Municipal District of St. Kilda (1862-64). Councillor of the Municipal District of St. Kilda (1861-64) and Councillor of the Borough of St. Kilda (1864-69)

Born in England in 1820, Brice Bunny studied law before coming to Victoria in 1852 to try his luck on the goldfields. After six months of unsuccessful prospecting at the Castlemaine diggings, Bunny returned to Melbourne where he soon established a reputation as a leading barrister particularly in the area of mining disputes.

In 1856, Bunny married Maria Hedwig Dorothea Wulsten, a German beauty, and they set up home in St. Kilda. Bunny was a member of the St. Kilda Council from 1861 to 1869 and was Chairman at the time of the council's transition from a Municipal District to a Borough Council.

Bunny later entered the Victorian parliament as the local member for St. Kilda (1866-68). In 1873, Bunny was made a judge of the County Court. Bunny died on 2 June 1885. His youngest son, Rupert, became a notable painter.

Henry Tullett - Church of England "B" 0123

Mayor of the Borough of St. Kilda (1868-69 & 1878-79). Councillor of the Municipal District of St. Kilda (1858-64) and Councillor of the Borough of St. Kilda (1864-82)

The Argus contained the following obituary for Henry Tullett:

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The announcement of the demise of Mr. Henry Tullett … was received with a widespread feeling of regret by a very large circle of friends, and especially among the residents of St. Kilda. The deceased gentleman had passed the last 28 years of his busy life in that borough. He originally started in business as an ironmonger, and from the com-

Grave of Henry Tullett
Church of England "B" 0123.

mencement of his career took an active interest in municipal affairs being elected a member of the first borough council on the 23rd of February, 1858. He remained a member of the council to the last, and was three times [sic] elected mayor. In his municipal capacity he was of the greatest value both to his colleagues and the public, and it is said of him that he literally had the Local Government Act by heart, and was a reliable authority on all points connected with municipal government. As a citizen of the borough, he was made a trustee of the St. Kilda cemetery, took a large interest in the promotion of the Ladies' Sea Bathing Company, and sat of the bench as an honorary magistrate for many years. Mr. Tullett also served as a volunteer in the St. Kilda Artillery … He also contributed largely to the formation of the St. Kilda Fire Brigade. Mr. Tullett once stood as a candidate for the representation of St. Kilda in the Legislative Assembly, but being defeated did not make another attempt to enter Parliament.

Tullett died on 12 January 1882 aged 50. Also buried in the Tullett grave is his wife Mary Anne (died December 1892 aged 60) as well as nine of their offspring all of whom died tragically young.

Thomas James Crouch - Methodist B - Grave No 0592

Mayor of the Borough of St. Kilda (1870-71). Councillor of the Borough of St. Kilda (1867-72)

Thomas James Crouch was born in Hobart in 1833. Having trained as an architect, Crouch arrived in Victoria in 1852 to try his luck on the goldfields. However in 1854 Crouch commenced business as an architect in Swanston Street, Melbourne. In 1858, he went into partnership with Mr Ralph Wilson to form the practice of Crouch and Wilson, one of Victoria's leading 19th century architectural practices.

The firm's work was prolific and included such landmark buildings as the St. Kilda Road Asylums for the Blind and for the Deaf and Dumb, the Prahran Town Hall, the Methodist Ladies College and numerous ecclesiastical buildings for most of the religious denominations across Victoria. Locally, Crouch and Wilson were responsible for the St. Kilda Hebrew Congregation's first synagogue in Charnwood Grove and also for the Wesleyan Methodist Church at the corner of Fitzroy and Princes Street, St. Kilda. Crouch was also instrumental in the formation of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects. In 1880, Crouch's ill health led to the dissolution of the firm although he continued to work independently until his death.

Crouch had been a St. Kilda resident since 1853 and became a councillor of the Borough in 1867. He served one term as Mayor. He died on 4 December 1889 leaving a widow, Mary Emma Bloor Crouch and nine children.

Octavius Frederick Wimpole - Roman Catholic "A" 533

Mayor of the Borough of St. Kilda (1886-87). Councillor of the Borough of St. Kilda (c1873-c77 & c1884-88)

The Argus reported the death of Frederick Wimpole:-

Among the obituary notices this morning is that of the Mr. O. F. Wimpole, the well known proprietor of the George Hotel, St. Kilda, who, after a long illness, died at his private residence, in Fitzroy-street, St. Kilda. A native of the Isle of Man, where he was born in 1839, Mr. Wimpole came to Melbourne early in the sixties, and subsequently leased the Volunteer Hotel, Daylesford, which he conducted until his removal to St. Kilda about 30 years ago. He took an active interest in the affairs of that municipality, and represented the West Ward on its council for some years, and served as mayor for the term 1886-1887. He was a justice of the peace. He has left a widow and four daughters and two sons.

Gillian Upton in her book *"The George: St. Kilda Life and Times"* notes that Wimpole actually arrived in Victoria in 1858 and that his first venture was in 1859 at the National Hotel on the Mount Alexander Road at South Gisborne. From Gisborne, Wimpole moved north to Woodend in 1861 where he took over the licence of the Dalhousie Hotel. It was there that he met a Miss Emma Hall and the pair were married in September 1862 at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne. It was soon after that the Wimpole's moved to the Volunteer Hotel at Daylesford where their first child was

The extensive Wimpole vault

born. Wimpole's parents arrived in Victoria in 1864 followed by a sister and her husband and children.

By 1870, Wimpole had moved with his family to Melbourne where he became the licensed publican of The George Hotel. The George underwent a major rebuilding program during Wimpole's management and on his death in March 1905, management passed to his eldest son, Frederick Wimpole junior.

In a curious twist, Frederick Wimpole's obituary in *The Argus* was followed immediately with one to John Oldham who was also a St. Kilda Councillor and former mayor (1869-70 and 1870-71). Both former mayors died on the very same day and were also buried in St. Kilda Cemetery on 22 March 1905. Frederick Wimpole's funeral was appointed to leave from his late residence, *Farndon*—Fitzroy Street, St. Kilda at 4:00pm on that day while John Oldham's funeral was to leave his late residence, *The Wattles*—Jackson Street, St. Kilda at 4:30pm that afternoon.

The Wimpole graves in the Roman Catholic A compartment of the cemetery form one of the most extensive family vaults in the Cemetery. The family vault consists of a massive raised granite block sitting atop a low platform.

Edward O'Donnell - Roman Catholic "A" 70

Mayor of the Borough of St. Kilda (1889-90). Mayor of the City of St. Kilda (1901-02, 1902-03, 1912-13, 1913-14 & 1917-18). Councillor of the Borough of St. Kilda (1888-90). Councillor of the City of St. Kilda (1890-1932)

Edward O'Donnell was born in Ireland in 1845 and arrived in Australia with his parents and siblings in 1855. As a teenager, he worked for Charles Bray, Licensed Grocer in Fitzroy Street, St. Kilda before taking over the business in 1868.

In 1872 he married Bridget Brown at St. Mary's, East St. Kilda. They were to have eleven children – eight daughters and three boys.

O'Donnell was elected a St. Kilda Councillor in 1888 and served without interruption for over 40 years before being defeated in the council elections in 1932, a year before his death. O'Donnell served six terms as mayor.

O'Donnell's many other public roles included membership of the St. Kilda foreshore committee, the Albert Park Committee of Management, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works and the Alfred Hospital Committee of Management. He was also a long standing Trustee of the St. Kilda Cemetery.

He died on 7 July 1933 and his name is commemorated by the O'Donnell Gardens.

(Source: Cooper, J. B., "The History of St Kilda 1840-1930" (1931) (BC); ADB Volume 3, MUP Press, 1969, p297 URL http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A030276b.htm (BB); The Argus 14 January 1882 (HT); The Argus 5 December 1889 (TC); The Argus 22 March 1905 – page 5; G Upton "The George: St Kilda Life and Times" (2001) (OW); The Argus 8 July 1933, The Tribune 18 October 1928 (EO)) ❧

Francis Edmondson: The tragic death of an "elderly" woman

*O*ur last issue of *Cemetery Conversations* contained an article by Helen McGrath on the music retailer, James Charles Wilson Nicholson. JCW Nicholson is buried in the Church of England Compartment of St. Kilda Cemetery. Also buried in the same family plot is Nicholson's first wife Diana *née* Rushworth as well as his sister, Frances ("Fanny") Edmondson.

The story of Frances Edmondson's tragic death is told in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 28 December 1897. To quote:

An elderly woman met with a sad death at Macdonaldtown last night. She had joined the 11.5 p.m. train from Sydney, and having barely time to board the carriage she entered the first compartment she reached. This proved to be a smoking carriage. She remained in the compartment until the train arrived at Macdonaldtown. Here she alighted for the purpose of entering another carriage, but being an aged woman her movements were slow, and by the time she had sighted a non-smoking compartment the train was in motion. The woman made a dash to get into the train, but she missed her footing and fell between the carriage and the platform. An alarm was immediately raised, and the train was stopped. The woman was extricated, but it was at once seen that her end was near. She was alive, but was unable to speak. She was tenderly conveyed to Sydney, but long before the metropolis was reached she had passed away. Her remains were taken to Sydney Hospital, where life was pronounced extinct, and the body was removed to the Morgue. The deceased proved to be Mrs. Fanny Edmonson (sic), a widow, residing at Kogarah.

A death notice was placed in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 29 December 1897 which read:

EDMONDSON. – December 27, accidentally killed at Macdonaldtown railway station, Fanny Edmondson, sister of T.C.W. (sic) Nicholson (Nicholson and Co.), aged 57 years.

Frances was on her way home at the time of the accident having spent Christmas with her brother James Nicholson.

It is perhaps amusing to think of a person of 57 years being described as "elderly" and "aged" but then life expectancy in the late 19th century was a deal shorter than today!

(Source: From material provided by Helen McGrath including extracts from the Sydney Morning Herald 28 Dec 1897 & 29 Dec 1897) ❧

Citizen of the Year 2006 – Pearl Donald

We are delighted to learn that Committee member, Pearl Donald, was jointly awarded Port Phillip's Citizen of the Year for 2006.

Pearl was one of ten people nominated by the local community for the Port Phillip Council's "Citizen of the Year" award. In a ceremony at the Esplanade Hotel on 5 December 2006 (International Volunteers' Day), Pearl was recognised for her community efforts in a presentation by Port Phillip Mayor, Cr. Janet Bolitho.

Pearl Donald (left) with a groovy looking Freda Erlich (Photo courtesy: J Hawker)

The citation in support of the award notes that:

Pearl has made an outstanding contribution over decades to promote local history in St. Kilda and Port Phillip. Pearl has provided free research and tireless responses to the many members of the public seeking advice and information about their past and family backgrounds. She is a founding member of the Friends of St. Kilda Cemetery and the longest serving committee member of the St. Kilda Historical Society.

Pearl's work with the Friends of St. Kilda Cemetery includes newsletters, annual walks, advocacy and publishing a book on the cemetery. Her work has played a major role in the Government recognising this historic cemetery as a national treasure. Local heritage activities, in which Pearl is heavily involved, play an essential role in integrating new residents, supporting current residents, providing information and opportunities to explore local neighbourhoods and building a sense of identity and inclusiveness.

Pearl admitted to being somewhat "abashed" by the honour, saying that she felt there were "hundreds of people who are more deserving".

Nonetheless, the Friends of St. Kilda Cemetery Inc. are thrilled that Pearl's contributions have been recognised by the local community. ✍

An invitation to the Friends of St. Kilda Cemetery Inc.

Australian Impressionists Exhibition

Friday 18 May 2007 at 10:30am, Ian Potter Gallery, National Gallery of Victoria.

Join members of the Friends of Boroondara (Kew) Cemetery Inc. and Brighton Cemetorians Inc. on this guided tour. See works by Tom Roberts, Fred. McCubbin and Jane Sutherland from the famous Heidelberg School of Art.

Cost is $17.00 ($13 concession). Bookings essential—contact Liz Hore on 03 9817 4896.

Forthcoming Activities

St. Kilda Council – 150 years of local government - Sunday 15 April 2007 at 2:00pm

This year is the 150th anniversary of the creation of the Municipal District of St. Kilda. At least 30 former St. Kilda mayors are buried in the Cemetery including Benjamin Cowderoy (first Chairman of the Municipal District of St. Kilda) and Brice Frederick Bunny (last Chairman of the Municipal District at the time of transition to a Borough Council). Other notable St. Kilda mayors buried in the cemetery include Sir George Turner (Victoria's first Australian born Premier), Captain Albert Jacka VC and the long standing Councillor and mayor Edward O'Donnell. To celebrate 150 years, a special event (including a cemetery tour) is being jointly planned with the St. Kilda Historical Society and the City of Port Phillip. Bookings essential by ringing (03) 9531 6832.

Barristers, Bobbies and Beaks Sunday 20 May 2007 at 2.00pm

Guided tour of the graves of judges; police and lawyers including those associated with famous cases such as the trials of Ned Kelly; the Eureka rebels and the notorious Frederick Deeming. Bookings essential by ringing (03) 9531 6832. ✍