

History of the Wangaratta Cemetery

Welcome to the Wangaratta Cemetery where both famous and infamous people are buried. From the following list, you will note that there have been several popular people interred here who have an interesting history. Each name has been allocated a number which is located on the map within this brochure. White poles have been placed at each site for you to easily locate each person.

The first Cemetery in Wangaratta, the Pioneer Cemetery, was originally located in Faithfull Street close to the junction of the Ovens and Kings Rivers. Only very few records and headstones of those buried at the Pioneer Cemetery still exist today.

In 1849 Dr Francis Murphy JP of Tarravongee, in a letter to the Department of Crown Lands and Survey, requested the establishment of a new burial ground for the town.

The cemetery now located on the corner of Tone Road and Mason Street was officially opened in 1851. No records were kept until 1862, eleven years after the cemetery was opened. It is assumed that many burials which took place during this time were not recorded.

The Borough of Wangaratta assumed responsibility as trustees for the cemetery in 1854. The Borough continued in this capacity until on the 10th of April 1862 a public meeting was held to elect religious trustees to the cemetery.

As was the normal custom, all religious denominations had an allocated section in the cemetery along with a section for 'Strangers'.

Official burial records at the Wangaratta Cemetery began in 1892. Those noted as buried here prior to 1862 are mere speculation. Many early sites are thought to be just headstones relocated from the Faithfull Street Cemetery.



The Wangaratta Cemetery self guided tour



Wangaratta Cemetery

Mason Street, Wangaratta 3677
PO Box 238, Wangaratta 3676
03 5721 3698
council@wangaratta.vic.edu.au



Wangaratta Visitor Information Centre

Open daily
1800 801 065
www.visitwangaratta.com.au



Rural City of
Wangaratta

Explore the secrets of the Wangaratta Cemetery

Every person interred within this cemetery has a story to tell, from early pioneers, bushrangers and colourful locals, this self guided tour offers a small insight into the lives of some of those which have helped shape Wangaratta into the town we know today.



Rural City of
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1. 2/24th Battalion Memorial

'Wangaratta's Own'

One of only two Victorian battalions in Victoria this Battalion stopped off at Wangaratta where they were welcomed with open arms by the local community as they rapidly built up their numbers. The people of Wangaratta adopted the Battalion and they became known as Wangaratta's Own. Presented with a 14 foot pennant the Battalion marched through the streets of Wangaratta on 27 September 1940 on the way to Boneyilla.

2. Daniel Charles Crotty

Daniel was an Australian Champion Roper and Rider. The Stockman's Hall of Fame at Longreach has a large feature display of Daniel's feats and achievements.

3. Fr William Hely



William was born in Ireland in 1837 and ordained as a priest in 1861. Sometime after that he arrived in Australia and was curate to Rev T J Egan at Wangaratta prior to 1876. William who had been showing signs of eccentricity, left his post allegedly stealing 300 pounds from the seminary.

Upon being found by Police in Wagga Wagga, who suspected William of another robbery in

Tongmain, William was shot and fatally wounded. It was later found that William had not stolen property or money and hence he was exhumed from his pauper's grave in Wagga Wagga and given a decent burial in Wangaratta on 4 November 1876.

4. William Cook

Crushed by a falling horse at Urana Races on 12 April 1869, William was taken to Wahgunyah for treatment. He was said to be the best Steeplechase Rider in the colony at the time of his accident.

5. Vault of the Unknown Children



"Our Little Earnest & Poor Anthony" is the inscription on the top of the vault and is the only clue to the identity of these children. The burial register has no record of the burials and hence may have taken place between the years 1851 when burials began and 1862 when the burial register commenced. The Wangaratta Family History Society undertook extensive research and believes that the boys might be Earnest J Spearing, aged 4 months who died in 1867 and Anthony R Spearing aged 11 months, who died in 1872. However this tends to not support the above theory re. burial dates.

6. Benjamin Warby



Benjamin was a pioneer of the Taminick/Wangaratta area, the Warby Ranges were named after his family. Benjamin was credited with pioneering the introduction of thoroughbred bloodlines to district horses. Benjamin had ties with notorious bushranger Daniel Morgan. Morgan stopped at Warby's station on his way to Peechelba (where he was fatally shot) and demanded that Mrs Warby make him some breakfast. He told her not to be afraid, no one at the station was to be harmed as he knew her husband and went to school with him near Campbelltown NSW.

7. George Faithfull

George Faithfull was born at Canterbury, New South Wales in 1814. He settled with his cattle at Oxley Plains and named his homestead "Wangaratta". George developed an interest in the growing settlement at Ovens Crossing, later to be known as Wangaratta, and bought land in the business centre. He was elected as trustee of the land donated by William Clarke for Holy Trinity Cathedral and was made an honorary Justice of the Peace in 1852.



He died in 1855 aged 42 and his memory as a pioneer is perpetuated in the naming of Faithfull Street, a plaque in the Holy Trinity Cathedral and a tomb in the Wangaratta Cemetery.

8. Henry Kett

Henry was a butcher and publican who owned three hotels. During his lifetime he also was a police officer and councillor. Henry was the first manager of the Wangaratta Brewing and Malt Company which was located in Chisholm Street. Henry was also well known for being the first person to be connected to mains water in the town. Henry passed peacefully reclined in the bathtub, having suffered a long term illness.

9. Isabella Pressley

Isabella is probably the oldest person to be buried in the cemetery at 106 years old. She was two months off celebrating her 107th birthday.

10. Sir John Bowser

Sir John Bowser came to Australia at age 3 from London in 1859. In 1880 he took up a position as editor of The Chronicle at Wangaratta. He became widely known in the district and respected for his integrity. In 1894 John was



elected Member for Wangaratta and Ovens in the Legislative Assembly. In 1917 he was elected as Premier of Victoria. In 1927, on the opening of the Federal Parliament in Canberra, John Bowser received a knighthood, conferred on him by the Duke of York (later King George VI) Sir John Bowser died aged 81, in 1936. He was accorded a State Funeral with a guard of honor by both Wangaratta High School and Wangaratta Technical College students.

11. Doris Myra Oulton Tilson JP

Doris was born in Wangaratta in 1893. Doris became a Borough Councillor and was the first female to be elected as Mayor in Wangaratta. In 1953 Doris received a Coronation Medal for her work with the Hospital Auxiliary and the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind. She was made a Life Governor of the Wangaratta District Base Hospital and the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind.

In March 1954, she drove 101 year old Elizabeth Eustice to Benalla train station to ensure she had a front row seat to the arrival of the Queen as part of her Royal tour. Doris died on her 75th birthday in 1968.

12. Chinese Grave sites



Part of the 'strangers' area for burial of denominations not recognized elsewhere in the cemetery. These Chinese were largely miners and market gardeners and are not actually buried in the cemetery. These markers have been placed here by their families in recognition of their lives.

13. Mary Jane Milawa



Gunyuk (Black Swan), also known as Mary Jane Milawa, was one of the many dispossessed Aboriginal people who were walked to the Moodemere Reserve. But she pined for her "country" and walked back to Wangaratta living out her days on the banks of the Ovens River with her dog. She died in 1888 and is buried in the Wangaratta cemetery, a plaque in her memory is located along the Bullawah cultural trail. Her descendants live on in the district today and maintain the stories and traditions handed down over the years. Her great, great nephew Freddie Dowling has written books to preserve the language and culture of his people and was instrumental in the development of the cultural trail.



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self-guided tour

14. Daniel Morgan



The notorious bushranger Daniel Morgan fled from NSW and was reported to be in the Wangaratta area. The Victorian police issued a challenge that if he ever crossed the border they would capture him. He did enter into Victoria where he held up the MacPherson cattle station at Peechelba, imprisoning 19 people, one managed to escape and alert the police. Daniel was surrounded and as he attempted to escape he was shot by one of the farm hands hiding in the bush. Following his death a scandal erupted as to the treatment of his remains by a certain Dr Dobbyn. His long flowing beard was peeled from his jaw and dried like a possum skin to be the trophy of one of the senior police. His head was cut off to be sent to Melbourne for scientific experiments however due to transit times it was well and truly decayed upon its arrival and of no use, eventually being discarded, these acts were not sanctioned by the authorities and those responsible received a severe reprimand. Originally buried in unconsecrated land as the cemetery has expanded, he now finds himself inside the front boundary.

15. John Martin Nicol

During his time as a Councillor, John became a hero of The Great Flood of 1917. He died while trying to rescue others in raging flood waters.

16. Dr Richard Howell Stanistreet

Richard Howell Stanistreet Ph C, FPS, MB, FRAC was born in 1923 at Ballarat and was the first surgeon to work in rural Victoria. In 1956 Richard was appointed to the Wangaratta Base Hospital and became widely known for his work as a surgeon in North



East Victoria and to the Snowy Mountains Authority. Richard retired as a visiting medical officer to the Wangaratta Base Hospital in 1989 and later the same year he died suddenly at the age of 66. The clinical services block at the Wangaratta Base Hospital is named the 'R H Stanistreet Wing' in his honour.

17. Lone Pine



18. Verner Kentman



Verner was born in Estonia in 1903. In 1955 Verner and his wife Trudi became the first migrant family to be naturalized in Wangaratta. They were active members of the Good Neighbour Council, Lions Club of Wangaratta and many other worthwhile organisations in the city. Verner was also a Migrant Councillor and established the Migrant Housing Commission where a total of over 470 migrants were helped to purchase homes. The Merriwa Park Soundshell is named in his honour.

19. William Hughes

A Welsh wheelwright, blacksmith and foundryman, William arrived in Australia in 1857. In 1868 he opened the first iron foundry at North Wangaratta. William was a draftsman, designer and inventor and therefore able to build his own designs of machinery which included harvesters, strippers, winnowers and a single and double furrow ploughs until his foundry was washed away in a big flood and all his patterns were lost. He lived at Boralma until he died in 1900.

20. Henry Archibald John (Jack) Dick



Jack was a wonderful and colourful character, an avid storyteller, farmer, swimmer, diver, professional sprinter, and member of the 1936 Wangaratta Magpies Premiership side. If Jack got called up for jury duty, he always rode his horse up to the courthouse then turned around and went home. Infuriated court officials would turn red faced when told he couldn't attend because there wasn't a hitching rail or water trough for the horse as required under local law at the time.

He cleared out the public bar of the Albion Hotel one Christmas day. They put on free beer for a couple of hours, but the public bar was too crowded for Jack's liking. He left and returned some 30 mins later with a hessian bag. Inside that bag were two tiger snakes that he promptly dumped on the floor of the bar, no more crowd problem for Jack. The barman refused to serve him until he bagged the snakes and took them away.

In his later years, Jack was frequently seen in the community riding his bicycle with his faithful dog on a box behind him.

21. Agnes "Hazel" Smith

Agnes Hazel Smith was born in 1910 in Wangaratta. In 1931 a Girl Guide group was formed in Wangaratta and Hazel Smith was one of the four chosen leaders. Three years later Hazel formed the 2nd Wangaratta Guides and was its leader for twelve years. She became District Commissioner for the Baree Region for four years and Regional Training Adviser from 1978 to 1983. In 1970 Hazel received the City of Wangaratta's Civic Award for her long service to guiding in the Wangaratta community. In 1981 she received the Wattle Award for "Meritorious Service to Guides" and in the same year a 50-year Service Award. She died in 1991 aged 81.

22. Mah Ket

Mah Ket was born in 1836 at Ning Yur (now Toi Shan), China. He was an educated Chinese man and came to the colony in 1855. Mah Ket later established his household closer to Wangaratta where he became a respected store keeper and tobacco grower. His family consisted of five daughters and one son, William, who became a prominent lawyer. The respected Mah Ket, later known as Ah Ket, died in 1896.

23. Agnes Reid

Agnes Reid was born in Scotland in 1793. She arrived in Australia in 1823 with her husband and three children. Agnes owned 'Carragarmungee Run' - a property extending 35 km from Ovens to Yackandandah. Her life there was a saga of a pioneering woman in lonely Australian lands. Agnes Reid died in 1860 aged 67.

24. Heritage Rotunda

Built by the Rotary Club of Appin Park in 2004, with assistance from the Goulburn Ovens TAFE, the Heritage Rotunda has been styled similarly to a rotunda that originally stood here. The rotunda is a gift that acknowledges the 150th year of involvement of the cemetery trust.

25. William Henry Edwards

Working as a blacksmith, William was a foremost citizen of his time and wrote accurately and copiously on Wangaratta. He was captain of the Wangaratta Fire Brigade for 25 years and served 30 years on the hospital management board.

26. Ambrose Parnell



Ambrose was a stonemason who produced many of the early headstones seen in the Wangaratta Cemetery. He also designed the two large Italian marble tablets inscribed with gold emblems and black lettering listing the names of nurses and servicemen of Wangaratta and District who served in World War One. These can be found in the Wangaratta RSL.

27. Edna May Harman



Edna was a member of the Airforce as a cook in her younger days. She was a well-known local identity and historian. Edna was a researcher for the Wangaratta Historical Society and was virtually a walking history book of Wangaratta.

28. Sergeant Arthur Loftus Maule Steele

Sergeant Steele is credited with the capture of Ned Kelly during the infamous 1880 siege of Glenrowan. Sergeant Steele also took a very considerable interest



in the culture of flowers; and was an extensive prize winner at Wangaratta and district shows. He was one of the oldest members of St. John's Lodge of Masons, Wangaratta, being a Past Master, and held the office of treasurer for over thirty years.

29. Jones Family



Johnny Jones, son of Inn Keeper Anne Jones, died in the Glenrowan siege from a stray bullet. Jane Jones died two years later. Other family members are also buried here.

30. Brigidine Order



The large concrete slabs contain the graves of many nuns. Nuns continue to be interred at this site today.

31. Michael Cusack



Coming out from Ireland as a convict for stealing a pig, Michael ended up owning most of Wangaratta. He was a member of Wangaratta's first council, was a publican and built the Council Club Hotel. He was also a butcher, auctioneer and early pioneer of the town.