

Presentation given at the Friends of Battye Library Inc  
On the 19 November 2013

Lorraine Clarke and Cherie Strickland

When Lorraine and I were asked to speak to you tonight about our work on the East Perth Cemeteries database it was suggested that we talk about the "Problems" "Errors" and "Challengers" that we encountered during our research.

Of these the list is wide and varied from:-

Finding the names of children listed on headstones only as "the infant children of!!"

Finding the Christian names for all the wives only known as MRS ?

Correcting the death dates on headstones that were erected some years after the death "the family thought dad had died on the 15 July when in fact it was the 15 January"

or knowing that a certain person should be in the cemeteries, so where is that one piece of information to tell you that they are buried in East Perth.

But we thought it would be much more interesting to share with you some of the fascinating stories that we uncovered during this 3½ year project.

I would now like to tell you how we decided on this project to try and create a more complete listing of the inhabitants of Cemetery Hill.

Lorraine was researching a family residing in Victoria in the 1900's when she come across an article in a Melbourne newspaper about a gentlemen who had travelled from Perth to Melbourne to be part of the 1901 federation celebrations.

Unfortunately he died just before the parade was to begin and was eventually returned to Perth and given a military funeral.

After some discussion about who he was, had we heard of him, is he on any of the current list of burials in East Perth, well the answer to that was NO. Lorraine did a quick search (thank goodness for Trove) and within 20 minutes had found another 36 burials that we're not on any of the databases that we had access to. The records that I refer to are the transcription of headstones, St George's Cathedral Burial Registers and the Burials taken from the Registry of BDM Records and produced by the Western Australian Genealogical Society.

Later that evening we headed out to the patio to join our husbands in a glass of refreshing water! After a few glasses we decided that as the newspapers are now digitised and other records readily accessible, maybe it was time to document all the early Western Australian pioneers who unfortunately where unable to afford a headstone or whose headstone has since been lost.

Now I will hand over to Lorraine who will amuse and delight you with some of the stories we have uncovered. Like -

Who travelled the furthest?

The sad tale of a jellyfish!

Don't go into the water.

Why is it here?

And who is Mary Mulligan?

Where was he buried or did they get it right?

Don't leave it lying around!

Who has bragging rights?

The following tales are derived from the inhabitants of the seven cemeteries at East Perth; as such there are no happy endings.

Whilst we have confirmed 9056 unique burials or memorials at East Perth, some of these pioneers wanted to be there more than others.

## **Dying to be buried at the East Perth Cemeteries**

As mentioned earlier **John Joseph Bryan** or Thomas as he was known was the catalyst for this project.

John Joseph Bryan was born 24/06/1862 Dinapur India, son of Deborah nee Phillips, of Tasmania and Sergeant Thomas Bryan of the 96<sup>th</sup> Regiment. John Joseph arrived in the Swan River Colony aboard the Clyde in 1863 with his parents, his father was an Enrolled Pensioner Guard and respected military musician. In 1878 John married Annie Louise Buggins in Fremantle, he was a member of the Fremantle Volunteers Band, Perth Volunteers Band and he took over the role of Band master of the Headquarters Band when his father retired in 1878. A printer by trade, he was apprenticed to Mr Edmund Stirling, and worked at the Inquirer, Daily News, Herald and WA Record, he then went on to start his own well respected printing business.

Bryan was in charge of the band for the West Australian Contingent who attended the opening of Federal Parliament in Melbourne, The Contingent of was made up of 200 hundred men, of which 39 were band members from Perth, Fremantle, Bunbury, Geraldton and Albany. The Contingent left Fremantle for Adelaide on the SS Marloo on the 24/04/1901 and then proceeded by rail to Melbourne.

Bryan, to coin the phrase used in the Sunday Times "dropped dead" on the 10/05/1901. He and his band were 200 metres from the saluting post at the official review of the Opening of Federal Parliament in Melbourne, attended by The Duke of Cornwall and York. Bryan had a heart attack caused from heart disease, his body was embalmed and returned to Perth aboard the SS Pilbara on the 23/05/1901 where he was afforded a Military Funeral on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June in the Roman Catholic Cemetery Perth, he was aged only 46 years. He left a wife and 4 children.

A well respected man who's burial in Perth was attended by the Premier, dignitaries and approximately 15000 to 20000 others and yet was not to be

found on any published databases nor a headstone memorialising his death. We hope that we have now righted that wrong.

**Sir Luke Samuel Leake** travelled 20438kms just to be memorialised on Cemetery Hill.

Sir Luke Leake arrived in the Colony as a 4 year old in 1833 with his mother and older brother. He became a successful business man, promoting immigration and public works, Director and Chairman of the Western Australian Bank, Chairman of the Perth Town Trust, Vice President and subsequently President of the Swan River Mechanics Institute. In 1870 he was elected to the Legislative Council where he was made Speaker, he was honoured for his devotion to the Colony by being made a Knight in 1876 and then granted a coat of arms in 1877.

Sir Luke left the Colony for a short 6 week tour of Europe aboard the Rob Roy on the 31/01/1886 accompanied by his niece Jane and later joined by his wife Louisa nee Walpole.

Interestingly when The West Australian newspaper referred to his journey, they commented that Sir Luke was returning home, one wonders he felt the same after living in the Swan River Colony for 53 of his 58 years.

During his stay in London Sir Luke was presented to Queen Victoria in the Drawing Room of Buckingham Palace.

It was reported in The Standard (London) on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1886 that Sir Luke Leake was seriously ill on that same day he died at 40 Welbeck Street Cavendish Square London. Much confusion over the location of Sir Luke's death was discussed in the West Australian newspapers over the following few weeks.

His obituary in The Inquirer on the 5<sup>th</sup> May states " The memory of Sir Luke Leake will remain ever green in the minds of all those who knew him, as being an upright gentleman, a staunch friend and the kindest, most genial and honest of all men".

Sir Luke's body was returned to the colony aboard the Elderslie, arriving in Fremantle on the 29<sup>th</sup> July 1886, 90 days after his sudden death. Lady Leake did not accompany her husband's body home rather returned with Mr Richard Sholl via Albany. I am sure this was due to protocol rather than her choice. His Public Funeral took place in the afternoon of the 6<sup>th</sup> of July, the streets

were lined with members of the public wearing black, and a service was held at St Georges Cathedral. His leaden Coffin bore the inscription Luke Samuel Leake died May 1<sup>st</sup> 1886 in his 58<sup>th</sup> year.

A brief note for a humble but influential man who left a lasting legacy on our State.

A man whose legacy is larger than life rests at East Perth however his death passed by with very little fanfare

**Henry Laroche Cole** rose from the ranks of seaman, having arrived in the colony on the Marquis of Anglesea in 1829, to become the Builder and Proprietor of the United Service Hotel; he was a chairman of the Perth Town Trust in 1853, then Chairman of the Perth City Council from 1858 to 1860. Married to Emma Read in 1837 they had no children. Henry Laroche Cole's voice is not heard in the newspapers after November of 1865, it is not clear when he had left Perth, nor the reason for his departure. The first evidence of his leaving Perth and being in Albany is that of his death notice on the 6<sup>th</sup> April 1866 which states that he had died 18 days before. No obituary, no letter to the editor nothing and yet before the end of 1865 his name appears in the newspapers almost daily. Henry Laroche Cole's body was returned from Albany to rest in the Church of England cemetery at East Perth between the graves of several old colleges.

For a man who was held in such high esteem as Henry Cole it is surprising that his death was met with a resounding silence.

Another of our founding family members died away from the heart of the Colony but was returned to be buried with his family.

**William Shenton**, the son of George Shenton and Annie Catherine Cousins was born in 1850 in Perth. His father was an entrepreneur and founding father of the Colony. William Shenton had left Perth at least 2 years before his death on a Pearling excursion to Port Walcott.

During his time in the North West he furthered his family ventures into the Pearl and Pearl shell business. News of his death reached Perth on the 15/02/1871, William had died after a slow fever on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1870 at a Mount Blaze Pearling station near Port Walcott and his body was disinterred at considerable expense to his relatives and was returned to Perth aboard the

Waterlily to be buried in the Family Vault on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 1871. His final journey home experienced favourable winds; his brother had gone to Mount Blaze to bring his body home. The Water Lily also brought seven tons of Pearl Shell back to Fremantle.

## **Prominent Family Interesting Tale**

Whilst all deaths in families are heartbreaking, most do not have a story like this behind them.

A beautiful summer's day in the January of 1894 was to turn the city on its head. Three siblings went crabbing near the William Street Jetty only two returned home.

**Victoria Hilda Chipper**, known as Hilda, was found drowned at one o'clock the following morning, what tragic events had taken place? Hilda was the daughter of John Charles Chipper and Grace Gertrude nee Albert, their daughter was only 7 years of age when she sadly died on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 1894. The story of her death filled the papers in the colony for some months to come.

Originally it was thought that Hilda had fallen off the William Street jetty and drowned, however her two brother's stories started to differ. A couple of men had been aboard a boat in close vicinity to the three children who had been crabbing and generally playing, they had not heard either splashing or any cries for help. Charles Chipper Hilda's half brother it seems had been the cause of his sister's death, the siblings had been arguing and Hilda threw a jellyfish at Charles and it hit him in the face, Charles then slapped his sister on the face and pushed her in the back from the steps of the jetty into the water. Charles had refused to give or seek any assistance for his sister.

An inquest was held, during which evidence was heard from Joseph Willis, Henry Pearce, William Whitsaw, as well as the police. The witnesses all told the court that the boys had not asked for any assistance nor had they heard Hilda cry for help.

Charles Chipper, was 16 years of age, he gave evidence to the Coroner that he had been crabbing with his sister Hilda and brother Willie, during the afternoon, Hilda had caught two jellyfish in her net she threw one on the jetty the other in his face. Charles then went on to tell the court that he hit his sister on the back and she fell in the water, she disappeared and then came

up near the steps of the jetty. He then went on to say that there was shallow water nearby, I went up the steps wound up my line and went home. He also deposed that he walked up the steps because he was frightened, he hit her because she threw the jelly fish at him, he had not meant to throw her in the water. He had not told his parents because he was frightened that his mother would give him a whipping. He stated that he had hit his sister earlier because she would not do as she was told.

The Coroner summed up by saying that all involved were incredibly affected by what they had heard, he regretted that the newspapers had published reports on the sad death and that there was no means of preventing them publishing such information.

Charles was charged with manslaughter. At a trial in April of the same year he was found guilty and sentenced to two years imprisonment at Rottneest.

## **The Deadly Swan River**

Like Victoria Hilda Chipper there are 86 men, women and children that we have identified as drowned in the Swan River and then buried in the East Perth Cemeteries, all of their stories are disturbing.

Three boy's one disastrous tale - **Theodore Hutton Parry, Robert Mace Wittenoorn, Lionel Robert Duncan.**

Our summer has always drawn members of the public to our beautiful waters either for swimming or some form of boating. On the 27<sup>th</sup> February 1892 five boys went sailing on the beautiful Swan River heading towards Freshwater Bay, the wind picked up and within moments the boat had capsized and all five boys were in the water. The boys had been having swimming lessons however only one of them was considered a good swimmer. Lionel Duncan was hit on the head as the boat overturned and drowned instantly. John Jones and John Beddoes tried to keep Robert Wittenoorn and Theodore Parry afloat. Jones using his own body helped Robert and Theodore until Beddoe retrieved boards and oars, however panic overtook the two young boys and they soon sank. Beddoes swam to a boat nearing the accident and got help. Jones was rescued soon after. Lionel Duncan's body was immediately found, however it took another day to find the body of Robert Wittenoorn, unfortunately both his parents were elsewhere in the country at the time of his death, both receiving the terrible news via telegram. Theodore Parry's body was later

recovered and he was buried on the 02/03/1892 the only boy to have been recorded in the Church of England burial records.

The deaths of the whole of the **McPherson family** seem to us to be the most heartbreaking.

A quiet Sunday outing turned tragic, William McPherson, his wife Emma nee Styles and their two children Evelyn Gwendolin aged 9 years and Rita Doris Sylvia aged 5 years were drowned on the 6<sup>th</sup> October 1896 on Melville Water. William formerly a Clerk of Works in Fitzroy, Victoria had only been in the Colony for 9 months. William McPherson was an inexperienced boatman and neither he nor his family could swim. The boat was lying 700 yards off the Swan Brewery when a gust of wind capsized the boat. Mr Stanley who was sailing with the family assisted Emma and the two girls back to the boat. In William McPherson's haste to get back aboard, he caused the boat to completely overturn causing his wife and girls to lose their hold. Emma and Evelyn managed to return to the boat again however Rita did not. With the family's struggles to right the vessel it kept turning over, they were all becoming exhausted. Mr Stanley a good swimmer was finally rescued by a passing boat, however the family who were not wearing any life vest did not survive. Emma McPherson's body was recovered however it was not until the following day that William, Evelyn and Rita's bodies were found. I am sure the clothes they were wearing whilst out boating would also have been a contributing factor in their deaths.

They were all buried together in the Church of England Cemetery at East Perth. News of this terrible event spread across the country, newspapers in Adelaide, Broken Hill, Portland Victoria, Maitland NSW and the Town and Country Journal in Sydney all reporting the tragic tale that took the lives of a family.

### **Why is it here?**

Headstones memorialising the dead are placed in a cemetery by the living, normally to signify the location of one's body or to give a place of remembrance if no burial place is known.

**Andrew and Isabella Dick Amos and Kate MacLachlan** have a memorial in the East Perth Cemeteries, their headstone is located leaned up against the



Chipper grave, one could assume that the exact location of their bodies within the cemetery walls is no longer known however Mr and Mrs Amos and Kate MacLachlan were not buried in the East Perth Cemeteries nor can we find any connection of them to the Swan River Colony.

Kate and her sister Isabella Dick were born in Tasmania to Isabella nee Dick and Charles MacLachlan, Isabella married Andrew Amos on the 2/12/1856 in Hobart; Andrew was the son of Margaret nee Lax and Andrew Amos. Andrew, Isabella and Kate were on the Steamer London returning to Australia from England when it sank on the night of the 11<sup>th</sup> January 1866. The London was classified as an A1 ship; she had left Plymouth on the 4<sup>th</sup> January 1866. On the morning of Tuesday the 9<sup>th</sup> the steamer faced a violent gale and the mast broke away, the Captain kept the engines steaming ahead, the gale continued until early the following morning causing the loss of lifeboats, the Captain informed the Chief Engineer that he intended to turn the ship back toward Plymouth. Whilst facing heavy seas the ship continued slowly back toward whence it came. Late Wednesday evening the heavy cross seas caused a mountain of water to fall heavily over the ship destroying a main hatchway flooding the ship with water. Repairs were attempted however within ten minutes the engine room was flooded. The Chief Engineer reported to the Captain that the fires were out and the engines were useless. The Captain remained calm and ordered the Maintopsail to be set in the hope of keeping her before the wind; this was rendered useless the wind tore the sail apart. The deck pumps kept the water at bay throughout the night however by 4am the ship became low and heavy and she refused to ride the waves, the ship was then struck by a heavy sea at the stern causing a breach letting water through. At daybreak the Captain calmly announced to the passengers whom were huddled altogether taking refuge, that hope of saving the ship was lost. The small life boats left did not appeal to the passengers as shelter in the heavy seas, they remained with the ship. Nineteen men including three second class passengers left the ship on a small boat, another boat with a few crew also left the ship soon after, leaving the passengers with life vests. The ship sank. 220 lives were lost including those of Isabella and Andrew Amos and Isabella's sister Kate. The crew who had made out in the smaller boats reach the safety of passing vessels.

A catastrophic tale, the question still remains how and why did the Amos MacLaughlin headstone come to be in the East Perth Cemeteries?

## Earliest Known burial at Perth

John Mitchell a Private of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Regiment has long been recognised as the first known burial in Perth, Private Mitchell was buried on the 06/01/1830, and however we now know there was an earlier burial in Perth area.

**Mary Mulligan** was buried opposite the Colonial hospital before the Perth cemetery was established; Mary was the wife of Thomas Mulligan also a Private in the 63<sup>rd</sup> Regiment. Mary and Thomas had arrived in the Swan River Colony aboard the Sulphur on the 8<sup>th</sup> June 1829. Mary died at the end of 1829 or the new year of 1830, the exact date is unclear, there are no records pertaining to her date of death or burial, however John Mitchell was buried on the 6<sup>th</sup> Jan 1830 at the East Perth Cemeteries and Mary's burial is not recorded after this. She was buried in a jarrah coffin, her remains were uncovered in May of 1877 whilst men were enlarging a well at an allotment owned by Mr Smith opposite the Colonial Hospital. Where her remains were reburied is not mentioned however we are sure it can be assumed that she was placed in one of the cemeteries at East Perth. Mary had not been in the Colony long when she passed away however she made news 47 years after her death and will be included as part of the East Perth Cemeteries collection.

## A Memorial the Community wanted

On the 18<sup>th</sup> August 1896 a few miles from Pinjarrah on the Williams Road between the properties of Mr Salter and Captain Fawcett, **Paul Alazay** was thrown from his horse when it is believed that his head hit a tree or tree stump. He had been on his way to Pinjarrah unfortunately it was at least half an hour before he was found. Captain Fawcett found Mr Alazay and brought him into Pinjarrah to Doctor Lovegrove, who immediately sent him to Perth. Doctors at Perth hospital on the 19<sup>th</sup> August declared that Mr Alazay was a hopeless case. He died later that day and was buried on the 21<sup>st</sup> in the Roman Catholic Cemetery at East Perth.

Paul Alazay had arrived in Western Australia in 1893 and within a short time period became an esteemed and respected member of the Murray Farmers Co-operative Association and of the close knit community of Pinjarrah and as such since his death a gloom passed over the township. The Farmer's Co-op sent a letter of condolence to Paul's father in France, in this letter the Co-op requested the Mr Francois Alazay allow the Association to erect a tombstone over his son's grave. In the December the Co-op received a response from

Francois expressing his gratitude to the Farmers Co-op for their condolences, also asking if the Association could attend the sale of his son's property ensuring that it was not sold for less than its value, he also gladly accepted their offer to erect a tombstone over Paul's grave.

A meeting of the Murray Farmers Co-operative Association was held on the 15<sup>th</sup> May 1897; during this meeting Edward McLarty brought to the attention of the meeting a "distressing hitch" which was causing a delay in the erection of the tombstone over Paul Alazay's grave. The Roman Catholic Church did not keep records of the locations of burials and therefore could not identify the location of Paul Alazay's grave. (We know how Mr McLarty must have felt), McLarty noted that the Roman Catholic Church still demanded payment of the sum of 1 pound 25 before the erection of the tombstone over the unknown location could take place. The meeting suggested that Bishop Gibney be approached to help the Roman Catholic Church identify the location of Paul Alazay's grave. At the June meeting of the Co-op efforts were still being made to ascertain the exact location of Mr Alazay's grave. As we are sure that members of the Co-op were at Paul Alazay's funeral you think that they would remember his burial location, however no further mention of the dilemma is in the newspapers. As you can see a headstone was erected in the Roman Catholic Cemetery and still stands today but does it sit over the right body?

### **Life ending so tragically**

So many of the burials at the East Perth Cemeteries are of children, **Maggie Adams** death is extremely heartbreaking.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 1887 Maggie, her friend and neighbour Robert White both 9 years of age, were playing together at Robert's house in Douro Street Perth, Mrs White was a home at the time, she had just passed the room where the children were playing when she heard gunshots, she raced back into the bedroom to find Maggie with terrific head injuries and poor Robert standing next to his friend screaming. Later Robert told the police that he and Maggie had gone into the bedroom to play and he had found the gun standing in the corner of the room, he picked up aiming it at the ceiling and then out the window, however it was too heavy for him and as it dropped the gun exploded, the bullet hit Maggie in the head and killing her instantly. Robert told the inquest he was unaware that the gun was loaded.

Unfortunately for Maggie's family her father was on his way back from Cossack and unaware that his daughter had been so tragically taken.

The inquest found that Maggie's death was accidental and thankfully no charges were made against young Robert White. The court asked that in future parents be more careful as to where they leave their firearms.

## **Bragging Rights**

Fate is something I believe in strongly. My business partner Cherie Strickland has a strong alliance with the Swan River Colony.

**Mary and Robert Strickland** along with their 6 children arrived on the Hooghly in 1830 as indentured servants to Thomas Peel. Uncovering their story has led us to a deep knowledge of the early colonists; however their connection with the East Perth Cemeteries is even stronger. The Strickland's have the most burials in one plot; their vault contains 26 known family members and 1 friend (26 of the 27 are named on the headstone). We believe that it was not just curiosity that led us to complete this database but Colin, Cherie's husbands ancestors taking us for a journey into their past as well.

As you can see from the stories we have told of the inhabitants of Cemetery Hill each has a fascinating tale, all tragic and they all touched our hearts. We hope the new website will give them the lasting legacy they so richly deserve.

Thank you