

Beechworth Cemetery was established in 1856 and contains the graves of many of Beechworth’s pioneers.

You can inspect several of these graves by following a marked route around the Cemetery, commencing at the main gates. Simply follow the arrows which will lead you to each historic grave.

The notes which follow explain the significance of the historic graves:

1. ALEXANDER ROY (DICK) HARWOOD

- Produced the first “Talkie” movies in Australia

Dick Harwood was an Australian film producer. He was the first Australian film producer to introduce “Talkie” films in Australia. His first two such films were “Isle of Intrigue”, and “Spur of the Moment”, both produced in 1931, made in and around Melbourne.

He died at Beechworth in August, 1983.

2. JACOB HOFFMANN

- American Civil War Veteran

Jacob Hoffmann travelled to America from his native Germany in 1864, aged 17. Almost immediately, he joined up in the American Army and served in the American Civil War as a private in the 4th and 9th New York Cavalries between April, 1864 and June, 1865.

These regiments were largely made up of German residents of New York.

He was involved in the battles of Todd’s Tavern, Cold Harbour, Spottsylvania and Shenandoah Valley Campaign.

He left the army in 1865 and went to sea, making his way to Australia some years later.

He married Sophie Esther in 1885 at the Alliance Hotel, Beechworth, and they had seven children.

His wife died in 1902, and eighteen years later, on 12th October, 1920, he died, aged 74 years.

3. JOHN DRUMMOND

- Battle of Waterloo Veteran and Pioneer of Beechworth

Born at Crieff, Scotland in 1791, a watchmaker by trade John Drummond joined the 71st Regiment (Highland Light Infantry) at Glasgow in 1807 aged 15, giving his age as 18.

He served in 11 battles of the Peninsular War against Napoleon, including Waterloo in 1815 and was wounded severely at Fuentes D’Onoro, 1811 (leg) and Victoria, 1813 (back).

Mr Drummond married Jan Currie at Falkirk, Scotland in 1821 and there were nine children of the marriage.

He was discharged as a Sergeant at Chester in 1828 by reason of being “worn out through length of service”.

John Drummond arrived in Australia about 1831 and worked on the farm of David Reid at Invermay Park near Goulburn. He probably came to the Beechworth area in the early 1850’s and worked for David Reid at Woorajay (Wooragee). A number of his sons had land in Wooragee, Woolshed and Beechworth in the 1850’s and 1860’s.

John died in the Ovens Benevolent Asylum in 1865 aged 73 of heart disease.

In 1858, he had given up his Army pension for the widows and children of the Crimean War dead. The ‘Advertiser’ in his obituary stated of him “A man cannot give more than all he possesses”.

There are only some ten authenticated veterans of the Battle of Waterloo, buried in Victoria as of 1994.

Due to the loss of early Beechworth Cemetery records in the great fire of 1867, Mr Drummond’s exact place of burial cannot be ascertained. His death certificate merely stating “Presbyterian section”.

This memorial marker was donated by members of the North-East Historic Group.

4. JAMES RILEY

- American Civil War Veteran

Born in New Jersey, America, in 1829, James Riley (whose real name was Oliver H. Atwood) enlisted in the American Army in 1862, aged 33. He was 6 feet 2 inches tall, with brown hair and grey eyes.

He served in the 155th New York Infantry, rising to the rank of 1st Sergeant. In 1864, he was badly wounded by gunshot in the right thigh at the battle of Reams Station on Weldon Railroad, and nearly lost his leg as a result.

He came to Australia and married Mary Reid at Beechworth in 1886, having previously been married in America and left a widower in 1870.

James Riley died in Ovens District Hospital, Beechworth, of acute alcoholism on 14th September, 1901.

5. GAMMON CHILDREN

The Gammon children’s grave is surrounded by a hedge just in front of the Rotunda. Inside is a statue of a sleeping baby, and the names of some of the children may be seen on the statue pedestal.

George (a chemist) and Kate Gammon (nee Burgis) lived in Ford Street. They had ten children, and seven of them are buried in this grave. Their names are Adelaide, Frederick, Louise, Florence, Agnes, Constance and Alice. They died progressively between 1862 and 1872.

Their ages at death ranged from 9 weeks to two years. They died from conditions such as atrophy (wasting disease) and diarrhoea.

By 1872, the Gammons had had eight children, but only one, Lucy, was still alive. In 1874 and 1878 Walter and George were born.

These tragic deaths illustrate the trauma of family life in the 19th century, when so many children died from illness and disease which is now able to be treated.

6. JAMES M. STOREY

- Mexican War Veteran

James Storey was born in New York in 1818. At age 22, In 1840, he enlisted in the American Army in the 2nd U.S. Dragoons. He fought against the American Indians in the West.

He re-enlisted in 1845 and served in the Mexican War between 1846 and 1848. In this time, he was present at the battles of Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, Monterey and Beuno Vista. At the famous cavalry charge at Resaca de la Palma in 1846, his horse was shot from beneath him.

Discharged in 1850, he worked as a miner in the Californian gold diggings until coming to Australia in 1853, where he made his way to the Beechworth diggings.

In 1857, he ran a boarding house at One Mile, and in 1858, he married Mrs. Eliza Hodgins. She had been transported from England for theft in 1839. In 1841, she married John Hodgins at Singleton, NSW, who had been transported in 1828.

James Storey died on 9th January, 1913, after a long life of almost 95 years. He is buried here with his wife Eliza.

7. JOHN WATT - Shot by bushrangers

John Watt arrived in Australia in 1858, aged 25 years, and lived in Bairnsdale for some time. He assisted Mr. Alexander Black in making the geodetic survey to determine the boundary line between Victoria and New South Wales.

From Gippsland, he moved to Three Mile, near Beechworth, and then to Bowman’s Forest. About April 1871, he became the landlord of the Wooragee Hotel.

On the night of Tuesday, 15th October, 1872, two armed bushrangers held up the Post Office/Store at Wooragee. They then went on to the Hotel where they held up and shot John Watt and a Mr. Kennedy of Albury.

John Watt received a gaping wound in his side from the shotgun blast. He did not die immediately but lived for nine more days, when the effects of the wound became too great for his system to cope with, and he died on Friday, 25th October, 1872.

8. JAMES INGRAM

- Beechworth’s “Grand Old Man”

James Ingram arrived in Beechworth in March, 1855, as a young man of 27 years, having landed in Melbourne from Scotland in December, 1852.

He came to Beechworth only three years after gold was discovered, and for the next seventy years was a leading member of Beechworth’s community.

From the very first he threw himself into the town’s development and was associated with almost every community activity. Here are some examples of James Ingram’s service to Beechworth:

- * He was the instigator of Ovens District Hospital, opened in 1857, and a member of its Committee of Management for seventy-two years
- * He was one of the founders of Ovens Benevolent Asylum and a member of its Committee of Management for sixty-five years. He was President of the Committee at the time of his death - aged 99 years.
- * He was influential in the establishment of Mayday Hills Psychiatric Hospital at Beechworth.
- * He was involved with the schools in Beechworth from the 1850’s and was instrumental in having the present Primary School built in 1875.
- * He was Secretary of the Beechworth Cemetery Trust from 1857 to 1927 - 70 years. He relinquished the position because of “advancing age”. He was then 99 years old.

Local residents remember him as a short, neatly dressed man in top hat and black frock coat who spoke with a broad Scottish accent. In his 73 years here, he became almost a legendary figure to successive generations of Beechworth citizens. He, died within six weeks of his 100th birthday, on 17th March 1928.

9. ROSETTA ISAACS

- Sister of Sir Isaac Isaacs

Rosetta was the sister of Sir Isaac Isaacs, the first Australian born Governor-General of Australia (1931-36). She was born at Yackandandah in April, 1863, and died there in October, 1864. The Isaacs family moved to Beechworth from Yackandandah in 1867, where young Isaac attended school, was a teacher here and later a State and Federal politician and was Chief Justice of Australia's High Court before being appointed Governor-General.

10. PIONEER GRAVES

- transferred from original burial ground

The present Cemetery was opened in 1856, but before that (between 1853 and 1856) the town's burial ground was in Loch Street, where the old Congregational Church and adjacent buildings now stand.

With the opening of the new Cemetery in 1856, it was decided to exhume the bodies of those buried in the Loch Street graveyard and transfer them to the new Cemetery.

The arrangements for this transfer of bodies took place in July and August, 1857 and on 24th August, the first twelve bodies were exhumed and placed in a temporary "dead house" to await reburial.

Between 24th August and 1st September, 1857, sixty-four bodies were exhumed and placed in the dead house. Where necessary, new coffins were provided.

One or two of the exhumed bodies were found to have been buried between two sheets of bark, and one body was found without coffin or bark. An empty baby's coffin was also found.

On 1st September, 1857, the bodies were taken to the new Cemetery. They were escorted in a formal procession, headed by the clergy and the Chairman of the Town Council and other Councillors.

They were reburied in a designated area in the new Cemetery and a fence was erected around the area.

Today, a memorial wall has been erected to mark the area where those early residents of Beechworth were buried after their exhumation and transfer from the original burial ground.

11. HENRY AH YETT

LAST CHINESE PERSON BURIED IN THE CHINESE CEMETERY

Henry Ah Yett, the last Chinese person buried in the Chinese section of Beechworth Cemetery, died at Reid's Creek on 31st July, 1932.

Mr. Ah Yett was a very old and well known identity of Beechworth and district, having lived in the area for over seventy years. He is believed to have been 105 years old when he died.

He came to Beechworth during the gold rush, and was a gold miner for a number of years. He later established a market garden at Reid's Creek and had numerous customers in Beechworth and Chiltern on whom he called regularly. He was also skilled in the use of herbs for medicinal purposes.

Mr. Ah Yett was noted for his honesty and his geniality and kindness to children was proverbial.

12. CHINESE GRAVES AND BURNING TOWERS

The Victorian goldfields were characterised by the large numbers of Chinese miners who, along with others from Britain and Europe, came to try their luck with the gold pan and pick.

Beechworth was no exception. By 1856, there were many Chinese in the district and the numbers swelled following the Buckland riots in July, 1857, when many Chinese, having been driven out of the Buckland, joined their brethren at Beechworth.

The Chinese formed their own community within the town, and "Chinatown" was to be found along the Lower Stanley Road, on the high side of where Lake Sambell is now situated. It had its own shops, Joss House and Temple.

The Chinese took an active interest in town affairs and were generous donors to the appeal to build Ovens District Hospital in 1856-57. They also formed a colourful part of the annual procession through Beechworth's main streets.

The Burning Towers were built in 1857, and were used for burning paper prayers and meals for the dead.

The towers were not used for cremation. It is interesting to note that in northern China, it was the custom to burn paper prayers and meals at the graveside, whereas in southern China, burning towers were used. The existence of the Beechworth Towers indicates that a large section of the Chinese community here were from southern China.

The altar in front of the Burning Towers was not built until 1883-84.

Although there are thought to be about 2000 Chinese persons buried here, it was the wish of all Chinese persons to be buried in China. For this reason it was relatively common for bodies to be exhumed and sent back to China with relatives, where re-burial would take place.

13. DAME (ANNIE) JEAN MACNAMARA, D.B.E., M.D., B.S., LL.D.(Hon.)

Dame Jean McNamara will long be remembered for her work as an authority on infantile paralysis (poliomyelitis). She was also instrumental in introducing myxomatosis into Australia.

Jean McNamara was born in Beechworth on 1st April, 1899. Her father was Clerk of Courts at Beechworth from 1894 to 1909.

She qualified in medicine at Melbourne University in 1922, and in 1934, married Dr. J. I. Connor, who died in 1958.

Her ashes are buried beneath the granite rock which marks her grave and which came from the Beechworth bush Dame Jean loved so well.

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would like to make a donation in the
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Researched and written for Beechworth Cemetery Trust
by Ian Hyndman.

(Acknowledgement and thanks to Bob Simpson for
information on American War Veterans)

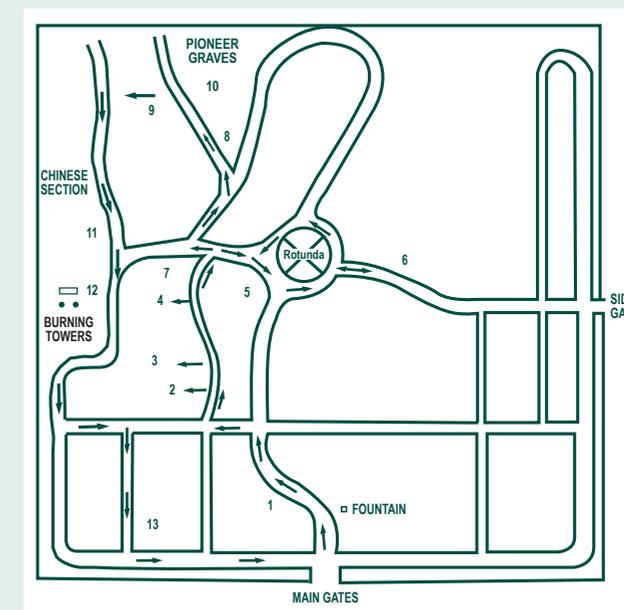
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Tour of Historic Graves at Beechworth Cemetery

Inspect these historic graves:

1. ALEXANDER ROY (DICK) HARWOOD
2. JACOB HOFFMANN - American Civil War Veteran
3. JOHN DRUMMOND - Battle of Waterloo Veteran
4. JAMES RILEY - American Civil War Veteran
5. GAMMON CHILDREN
6. JAMES M. STOREY - Mexican War Veteran
7. JOHN WATT - Shot by bushrangers
8. JAMES INGRAM - Beechworth's "Grand Old Man"
9. ROSETTA ISAACS
10. PIONEER GRAVES
11. LAST CHINESE BURIED AT BEECHWORTH
12. CHINESE BURNING TOWERS
13. DAME JEAN MACNAMARA

Diagram of Tour



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