



**FRIENDS of  
BOLTON STREET  
MEMORIAL PARK INCORPORATED**  
PO BOX 2336, WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND  
<http://www.boltoncemetery.org.nz>

**NEWSLETTER No 66 DECEMBER 2008**

**Editor: David Dunsheath**

## **SEARCH FOR MISSING GRAVES**

Just because we have grassed areas within the Bolton Street Memorial Park does not mean there are no burials under them. In fact about one third of recorded burials have no visible grave structures now, but may originally have had wooden fences.

The locations of missing burials may be found using ground penetrating radar (GPR), which transmits microwaves into the ground. Reflections of these are detected from buried objects or from boundaries between differing soil layers. The timing (in millionths of a second) and strength of each resulting 'echo' collectively give an indication of the depth and nature of buried objects.

A GPR survey was recently commissioned to clarify the location of any remaining graves in the vicinity of the Bowen Street park boundary on the city side of the



**Nick Perrin (left) and Martin King (geophysical engineer) viewing the screen generated by the orange GPR sensor box (right).**

*Photo: Priscilla Williams*

motorway. This area, originally known as 'Compartment A'<sup>1</sup> of the Public (Sydney Street) Cemetery, forms what is now the Ramp Path, and Robertson Way between the lower end of the Denis McGrath foot-bridge and Governors' Way. Exhumations were undertaken between 1968 and 1971 prior to the proposed, but then abandoned, construction of the Bowen Street motorway on-ramp.

Specific aims of the radar survey were to establish whether or not any graves are still present under Robertson Way, whether there are any areas clear of burials which could be suitable sites for seats, and whether or not Mr Richard Knuckey, who died in 1887 was still present under Governors Way in plot 300.

At the time of the disinterments for the motorway, the acting Sexton, Mr P J E Shotter kept a daily diary to record the known plots excavated, the number of human remains recovered, and other notes. However, identification of original plot numbers was often difficult to establish because so many graves were listed as "unknown".

The Friends now hold known information in a database to allow sorting by plot number and date of excavation, for correlation with plot locations on old maps. By checking the dates of excavation of firmly-identified plots, it is possible to determine which area was excavated on a certain day. We can, therefore, be sure of the day that plots not identified at the time were indeed removed. The failure to identify all the plots at the date of excavation created uncertainty over the exact boundary of excavations, until now with the use of ground penetrating radar.

In the remaining portion of Compartment A are 6 graves with visible structures, two of which are unidentified. But the map made in 1928 and the burial register, indicate there should be at least 83 burials in the plots untouched by the motorway excavations. The known grave of Richard Knuckey (plot 300.A) was not recorded by Mr Shotter and was, therefore, either still present under Governors Way at the foot of the Boxall grave, or had been removed with adjacent graves on the same day.

### **Results from the survey**

- Richard Knuckey is no longer present at his original burial site.
- The edge of the motorway exhumations under Ramp Path has been established with greater certainty than was previously possible.
- There are no remaining burials under Robertson Way between the corner of the Park nearest Parliament and the foot of the Denis McGrath footbridge.
- Two graves between that of Ah Chung Yip (N14 24) and Robertson Way were very clearly identified, with a skewed orientation of one of them with respect to most other plots which matched exactly one plot shown on the 1928 map.
- Other areas of grass in both Compartment A and the adjacent Church of England blocks around the Wakefield grave, either show clear indications of individual burials or indications of disturbed ground inferred to be burials. A number of those in Compartment A can be almost certainly correlated with plots and names shown on the 1928 map.

*continued page 4*

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<sup>1</sup> 'Compartment A' comprises grid squares N14, 15 and 16 and O14 and 15 on the modern map.

## RITA ANGUS AND THE BOLTON STREET CEMETERY

A talk by Jill Trevelyan on Rita Angus and her relationship with the historic cemetery was the highlight of the 2008 AGM of the Friends of the Bolton Street Memorial Park. This year marks the centenary of the artist's birth and was celebrated by a major exhibition at Te Papa as well as the launch of Jill's definitive biography "Rita Angus, An Artist's Life". Jill's talk, lavishly illustrated with photographs of sketches and paintings, was therefore of topical interest.

Jill noted that Rita had for many years regarded the cemetery as one of her favourite places and had lived nearby, overlooking the graves. She was, therefore, shocked by the news in the 1960s that it was to be partly destroyed for the motorway.

She joined protests against the demolition, becoming involved with the *Bolton Street Preservation Society*. Her activities were channelled more precisely by a joint project with her friend and fellow artist, Juliet Peter, to record the cemetery before it was altered completely. Jill described how these two artists would slip quietly and illegally into the cemetery each Sunday over the summer and autumn of 1969, sketching tombstones with their surrounding fences, trees and plants. Later Rita, now fascinated by the tombstones and their recorded lives, tracked down the stones to the Sydney Street storage site and sketched their tumbled heaps, filling sketch books with poignant drawings of the uprooted memorials.

Jill showed us photographs of these sketches and also of some painted works developed from these during 1969. One of the best known is "Flight", a composite portrait in oils of a stone dove flying above the tombstones against a background of boats at Island Bay. Two other oils she developed from her sketches are "Tombstones from the Bolton St Cemetery" and "Trees and Tombstones". All these works are held by Te Papa on loan from the Rita Angus Estate. A delicate water colour shows the Liberty figure from the relocated Flyger tombstone. Unfinished works in oil include one where a mysterious letter E hovers over a fallen angel. The poignancy of all these later works is enhanced by Rita's knowledge that she was reaching the end of her life. She died on 25 January 1970, leaving a rich legacy in her sketch books of the cemetery tombstones.

More information about Rita Angus and the cemetery can be found in Jill Trevelyan's biography "Rita Angus, An Artist's Life" and in the catalogue of the Te Papa exhibition "Rita Angus, Life and Vision" which includes an essay by Lydia Wevers on the Bolton Street Cemetery.

*Priscilla Williams*

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## RITA ANGUS DOCUMENTARY: SPECIAL OFFER TO FRIENDS

Gaylene Preston's wonderful film, *Lovely Rita*, about Rita Angus is available on DVD and we have the opportunity to offer it to members of the Friends for only \$21 (incl p&p). Ideal for Christmas presents – **but please make sure we have your order by Wednesday 10 December 2008**. Phone Kate Fortune (04) 970 0024, email [kate.fortune@paradise.net.nz](mailto:kate.fortune@paradise.net.nz), or write to P O Box 2336, Wellington 6140.

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## MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCES

As at the end of October 2008, we are delighted to welcome seven new members this financial year. Current membership stands at 114 individuals, families and corporate members – an increase of 5.5% over last year.

Our finances continue to look very healthy, boosted with a recent \$2,000 grant from the *Lion Foundation* for the ground penetrating radar survey reported elsewhere, and a grant of up to \$7,734 from the *Wellington City Council General Grants – Social Pool* (for new markers for the Memorial Trail). I am pleased to report that we have also received \$1,135 in donations so far this year.

*Kate Fortune*

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## COMMITTEE CONTACTS 2008-09

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## SEARCH FOR MISSING GRAVES - *continued from page 2*

- There appears to be a row of burials along Governors' Way in front of the row between the Brandon and Armstrong graves, including two clear indications of burials next to the Philips grave (M16 05). These must be very early burials, as they are not shown on any old maps.
- Areas where large trees now grow or used to be located, failed to reveal clear indications of burials. But the radar signals differed from those in undisturbed ground so it can be inferred that burials are present.
- Since these areas are outside the motorway excavation, and the maps record burials at these locations, we can be certain that there are only very small areas that do not have burials under them.

We thank the *Lion Foundation* for generously financing this work, which has solved quite a number of mysteries in this area.

*Nick Perrin*

## TOURS REPORT

During October three tours took place. The first of two Spring Festival Tours was on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> October in wet and windy conditions. Twelve people were guided by Priscilla Williams. The second, on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup>, enjoyed better weather and numbers, with 20 participants guided by Nick Perrin and John Daniels. A tour for 45 people from The Hutt Seniors Group took place on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October, guided by John Daniels and Judy Bale.

A 'Rose Sunday' public tour was held in perfect weather on November 30, when a group of 8 people were guided by Kate Fortune.

Total donations from the four tours amounted to \$196. Thank you to all the participants and guides. It is good to see so much interest in the Park and its history.

*Judy Bale, Tours Organiser*

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## VOLUNTEER WELLINGTON HELPS OUT

Two highly successful working bees in the Bolton Street Memorial Park this year have been conducted through the involvement of *Volunteer Wellington* which runs the 'Employees in the Community' programme. This offers community organisations like ours the opportunity for a group of corporate employee volunteers to turn up for a full working day. Half a dozen staff members from *ANZ Bank* worked in the vicinity of Easdale Street on Friday 27 June, and about 14 *British High Commission* staff worked in the lower Park, around Madeley Path, on Friday 31 October. Valuable progress has now been made on cleaning headstones and clearing graves in both these locations.



*British High Commissioner George Fergusson meets WCC gardener Rachel Solomon (centre) during the BHP working bee. From left, Graham Fortune and Margaret Fergusson.*

*Story and photo: Kate Fortune*

**MANAGER BOTANIC GARDENS: ANNUAL REPORT (2 JULY 2008)**

This year has proved to be a major one for the Park landscape and it is hoped that we do not have such a change in the landscape again for some years to come.

The removal of the macrocarpas from adjacent to Robertson Way was spectacular and rapid. It is difficult to prepare for such sudden change in the landscape. It was however a process which we were able to control rather than respond to in a weather-related event when a large amount of damage may have occurred. The two pines closer to the motorway below Lyon Path were also removed in a faultless piece of work by the contractors, fortunately with less of a visual impact on the Park.

We recognise the heritage and framework values of the conifers and have begun to renew them. These will be managed trees and not left to their own devices as were the previous ones. The macrocarpas are the smaller weeping versions similar to those removed near the Seddon Entrance. It is unlikely at this stage that pines will be reintroduced into the Park.

Throughout the Botanic Garden and Bolton Street Memorial Park we are developing a comprehensive tree framework management document which will guide our management of the trees, their maintenance regimes and possible removal and replacement into the future.

Management of the 'wild' area of the Park continues to generate discussion between ourselves and the Friends and I'm not sure that our versions of the Management Guidelines quite coincide yet. It is to the credit of the Friends that you are prepared to challenge decisions and that we can work towards mutually agreed outcomes.

The 2007-8 repairs to graves have been completed as well as the repairs required from the collapse of the elms on Powles Path, repairs to headstones damaged in the removal of the macrocarpas and additional repairs on Goat Path. We look forward to working alongside the Friends in the repairing of the wooden headboards and resolving the delamination that is occurring on a number of the headstones as priorities for next year's work.

The relocation of the Turnbull Headstone has been very successful and I look forward to the installation of the interpretation to support that. I would like to acknowledge the Friends as well as the Friends of Turnbull Library in achieving this.

Vegetation management will be planned more transparently next year though in reviewing the 2006 list, good progress has been made but perhaps not on some of the higher profile sites as would have been desirable.

The Sexton's Cottage Conservation upgrade has been completed this year and work will soon get underway to install some interpretation relating to the Cottage. On Saturday Ding Jie from Beijing moves in as Artist-in-Residence for two months. She will be developing her project and facilities made available by Massey University. Lee Kit completed the first stay over the Christmas period last year with a subsequent exhibition held at the Enjoy Gallery. Work is well under way for the next residency.

A review of the Early Settlers funding shows that it will run out in about 5 years. I will be attempting to have an equivalent value inserted in the Capital Works budget as part of the new Long Term Council Community plan for which planning gets underway this year. As the opportunity arises I would urge the Friends to support this need for ongoing funding for the restoration programme for the Park.

As ever I would like to thank the gardens team for the work they have done in the Park and particularly the management team who had to cover during my secondment. It is also with great thanks that I acknowledge the ongoing work of the Friends and the leadership Priscilla provides. To date the record is three letters in one afternoon! The scrutiny and inevitable assistance from the Friends that follows remains appreciated. On behalf of Paul Andrews and Council, thank you.

*David Sole, Manager, Botanic Gardens of Wellington*

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## SEXTON'S COTTAGE AS AN ARTIST IN RESIDENCE HOUSE

In our newsletter 62 of November 2006, we described the historic importance of the Church of England Sexton's cottage as one of the oldest inhabited buildings in Wellington. This tiny, charming cottage now has a new role. A year ago the *Bolton Street Cottage Artist-in Residence Programme* was launched, being a new initiative developed from a partnership between the *Wellington City Council* and the *Asia New Zealand Foundation*. The residency is open to arts practitioners from Asian countries working in any genre including visual arts, performance, literature, moving image, new media and design. Each residency is project-based, directed by the artist and their particular discipline. One of the sponsors of the Programme is the neighbouring *Bolton Hotel*.

The inaugural artist for the Programme was Lee Kit, a contemporary visual artist from Hong Kong, who lived in the cottage last summer. Over winter of 2008, an artist from Beijing, Ding Jie, occupied the cottage, working with *Massey University's* School of Fine Arts. She enjoyed its central location though found the thin wooden walls to be a challenging experience during the colder months. The third artist to occupy the cottage is Ai Sasaki from Japan, also a visual artist. Her residency is from September to November 2008 and she is working at the *Wellington Arts Centre*.

There are three other cottages in the neighbouring area which also host artists-in-residence programmes: the Randell Cottage, the Lilburn Cottage and the Rita Angus Cottage, all overlooking the cemetery from Thorndon. The original members of the Randell family are buried in the cemetery, while Rita Angus's association with the cemetery is described elsewhere in this newsletter.

*Priscilla Williams*

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## FIRST OF SUMMER'S WORKING BEES

The first of this summer's working bees for members of the Friends was held on 9 November. Memorials, including the very distinctive Harry Holland sculptured monument, were cleaned along the top end of Robertson Path (adjacent to the Seddon Memorial entrance to the Park).

Further working bees will be advertised by email in 2009. Any members wishing to be added to our emailing list are invited to contact Kate Fortune on [kate.fortune@paradise.net.nz](mailto:kate.fortune@paradise.net.nz) tel (04) 970 0024.



*Some of the Friends who attended the November working bee, beside the Harry Holland memorial.*