

FRIENDS OF BOLTON STREET CEMETERY

Newsletter No. 3 - April 1978

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The annual general meeting of the Society will be held on Monday 8 May at 8 p.m. in the Common Room, St Andrew's Church, The Terrace, Wellington.

We have two interesting speakers to follow the formal business: Mr Chris Howden (who now works for the Auckland Regional Authority) will talk and show slides on reserves in general and the cemetery in particular, and Mr Donal Duthie of W.C.C. Parks and Reserves Department will explain the Council's management plan for the cemetery.

Secretary

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The Society needs a secretary for the coming year. The work is interesting and not too onerous. If you would like to do the job or would like to know more about it phone David Kidday 836055 as soon as possible.

NOTES:

The cemetery is looking very much tidier, mostly due to the efforts of three full time Council workers. This has largely removed the need for weed cleaning activities by the Friends and our efforts are now being concentrated on two other objectives: painting of deteriorating decorative iron work and preservation of timber railings and memorials. If you would like to work on iron or wood work, this can be done in your own time, by arrangement with Anne Burnett (Phone 863206). Materials are provided. We also need the services of a carpenter and/or bricklayer, to work at his/her own convenience under the direction of Donal Duthie, on grave renovation. Once again materials are provided (please contact Donal Duthie at phone 724 599).

The opening date for the motorway has apparently been slipped again, with May now the likely date. Let's hope the foot bridge over the motorway will be finished by then, the last few touches seem to be taking a very long time.

The Council has advised us that they have 300 old fashioned rose bushes being readied in the nursery, for planting out in the cemetery this winter. It is hoped the Friends will take part in the planting out, and members are also encouraged to plant out any roses they have been caring for, this winter. The Council would welcome any donations of Spring bulbs, or Watsonias, Sparaxias etc which are surplus to members requirements. Spring bulbs need planting right away - please contact Donal Duthie or Anne Burnett - see above for phone numbers.

On May 16 this year the annual wreath laying ceremony at the Edward Gibbon Wakefield grave will be reinstated. Watch the newspapers for more details.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Maori Memorials:

After a lot of painstaking research into the Maori Land Court Minutes, and with help from individual Maoris, Lady Fleming is compiling biographical notes on the Maori headstones.

Biographical Research on the Headstones :

Thanks to the efforts of many members and others, including a group from the Wellington Central Rotary Club, and the New Zealand history group of the Federation of University Women, we now have some biographical information about the majority of the headstones. A few members have searched 30 or more names. About 100 names arranged chronologically by date of death, still remain to be searched. Are there any kind members and/or their friends who would help us to conclude this first part of the project by taking a further 10 names each to look up in newspapers over the winter? If you can help, please ring Mrs Alington - 768495.

Jewish Graves :

Do you know of someone who would be interested to look up obituaries etc. for the 40 graves in the Jewish cemetery?

REINSTATEMENT OF HEADSTONES

Good progress is being made by the M.W.D. with reinstating the removed headstones held in storage since 1968. The Friends are cooperating with the Ministry to ensure that memorials are returned to appropriate parts of the cemetery, and that all the removed stones can be accommodated in the remnants of the cemetery. It is interesting to note that Graham Bell, the engineer supervising the reinstating, is a great-great-grandson of David Robertson, sexton of the public portion of the cemetery from 1857 to 1887.

Mr Pyne of the Evans Bay Timber Co. treated, at no cost to the Society, the dozen or so wooden memorials awaiting return, thus prolonging their life indefinitely.

Recently identified amongst the returning headstones is a small casket inscribed: JOHN, 12 Oct 1983, which marked the grave of the infant son of Sir James and Lady Fergusson. Sir James was the 8th governor of New Zealand, and grandfather of Sir Bernard Fergusson.

1883

THE STORY BEHIND THE STONE

by M. Fleming

In the Bolton St Cemetery there is an old headstone to the memory of Rira Porutu, a chief of the Ngatiawa tribe who died on 10 March 1866. Nearly all the Maori graves I have studied so far have belonged to members of that tribe from Taranaki. They came south with Te Rauparaha and his Ngatitua followers and settled in Waikanae and on the western shores of Port Nicholson. There they came under the influence of the Maori missionaries and in 1839 of Octavius Hadfield himself.

As there was nothing in the local newspaper of the day about the old chief's death I asked Mr Ralph Love if there were any descendants of Rira Porutu living in Wellington today, and he suggested that I try Mrs Maira Tahiwai. Mrs Tahiwai was very pleased to help me as Rira Porutu was her great-grandfather, and from her I learnt that he had been a chief of the Pipitea Pa where he was living with his two wives, three sons and a daughter at the time of European settlement. The pa was situated behind the beach below the low cliff in the area of Thorndon Quay south of Davis St, below Old St Pauls Cathedral - the site for the new Ngati Poneke Marae.

After showing initial hostility to the pakeha, Rira Porutu made his mark, along with the other chiefs of Port Nicholson, at the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi; and he also took an active part in the Kohimaramara Conference of Chiefs in 1860. This Conference was convened by the Government in the hope of averting the land troubles in Taranaki and the Waikato, and from reports Porutu was seen as a peace-loving man if treated fairly.

There is a family story about the old chief. When Col. Wakefield arrived, Porutu did not wish to sell his land or have pakehas living among his people. When the 'Adelaide' sailed into the harbour on 7 March 1840, she was forced by the weather to anchor off Pipitea. Two young men, Thomas Wilmore McKenzie and Edwin Ticehurst took a boat and began to row about the bay. Rain drove them ashore at Pipitea and they sought shelter in a new share built for the arrival of Dr Evans. Suddenly Porutu arrived, accompanied by his 2 wives and 30 of his people. The whare was tapu. When the enraged chief approached the boys, brandishing his greenstone mere, one of the wives rushed forward and threw her cloak over the boys, thus making them tapu. After much argument and intercession on the part of the chieftainess the boys were saved. Mr Ticehurst returned to England but Thomas McKenzie lived on in Wellington and became a leading newspaper man and

a firm friend of the Porutu family. When he died his coffin was draped with the cloak that had saved his life as a boy. He was buried in the Bolton St Cemetery not far from Rira Porutu, but the motorway has destroyed both sites.

Today the cloak and mere 'Okiwa' are on show in the National Museum, loaned by the family; and Thomas Wilmor McKenzie is remembered by the block of flats in Tinakori Road built by his son and named Wilmor after him.

Rira Porutu had two brothers who often visited him at Pipitea; his sister was the mother of the prophet Te Whiti of Parahaka. His eldest son Ihaia was a man of intelligence. He worked for many years as a native assessor, held in high esteem by his people from his birth and ability. Lindauer painted a portrait of his wife Ruhia who is also buried in the Cemetery. After her death he married again but was an invalid for the last years of his life - suffering from rheumatic gout - but on fine days he was wheeled about the town in a chair to see his many friends. When he died in 1886 his brother Henare made a special application for permission to be given for his cousin Te Whiti, a political prisoner at the time, to attend his funeral but Mr Ballance declined the request.

His sister Harata married Mohi Puketapu and moved to Waiwhetu where the Puketapu family have their marae. His young brother Henare Apiti (Henry Pitt) married and had a family of 8, many of them dying of T.B.. One son Arthur survived his brothers and sisters and became the father of Mrs Tahiwī (Mairatea Pitt Porutu) and her brother Arthur Caleb Pitt now living in Australia. All the family are buried in the Bolton St Cemetery except one son who died in Sydney and Arthur who is buried in Karori.

Henare was the first Maori policeman and later a Customs Officer; in his retirement receiving a pension of £100 a year. Mrs Tahiwī still possesses his hat band with the heavy metal lettering and the family Bible records the births and deaths of all the family in the back. At the time of his death in 1904 he was farming his property at 'the Nainai'.

Rira Porutu, his wives and family should be remembered among the first citizens of the city of Wellington.