



FRIENDS of BOLTON STREET CEMETERY INCORPORATED

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<http://www.boltoncemetery.org.nz>

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Editor: Kate Fortune

HERITAGE FESTIVAL TIME IS HERE!



This year's Heritage Festival in Wellington has featured four different guided tours in the Bolton Street Cemetery. The always popular 'Tiptoe Through the Tombstones' has been supplemented by 'Rita Angus and the Cemetery', 'Crime and Punishment' and 'Wonderful Wahine: Women in the Cemetery'.

The programme opened at Labour Weekend and ends on Sunday 17 November, with bookings available via Eventfinda. We have been getting great feedback, and acknowledge our three tour guides with thanks: Barbara Mulligan, Peter McHardy and Kate Fortune.



We'd love to hear from members willing to be trained as tour guides. Give it a try, it's not only fun but also really worthwhile – and the tours bring in very useful income to assist with our activities.

Barbara is on the far right in these two photos taken by Kate Fortune.

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Barber Family, Butchers of Wellington	2	'Flight' by Rita Angus & the BSC Museum	7
WWI Memorial Walk (self-guided tour)	4	Conservation & Repairs, 2023-24	10
Introducing Christine Harper	6	Working Bees	10
Committee List 2024-25	6	Heritage Daffodils on Display	11

BARBER FAMILY, BUTCHERS OF WELLINGTON

Henry Barber arrived in Wellington in 1857, having left his family home in London at the age of 19 to “see the colonies” (according to his obituary in 1905). His mother, Sarah, died in October 1857 in London, and afterwards, his brother James (James Otho) followed him to Wellington in 1858, and their widowed father, Otho Barber, other brothers and a sister soon followed them.



A photograph from the 1850s (probably 1857-59) of Henry Barber's butchery business, showing the proprietor standing in front of his shop.

*Courtesy WCC Archives,
Ref: AM001-18*

In 1861 Henry and James bought out the butchery business that had been established in 1851 on the corner of Lambton Quay and Willis Street by George Henry Luxford. So began the long partnership of J & H Barber, butchers. (Henry had already been in the butchery business since the late 1850s). It seems the father and several brothers all worked for the company in the 1860s and 1899.

Established 1861 **BARBER & CO.** 78 Years' Trading
— Shipping and Family Butchers —
174A LAMBTON QUAY . . . WELLINGTON
(Successors to James and Henry Barber)

The Founders of the Business

Mr. Henry Barber arrived in Wellington in the year 1857, and a year later was joined by his brother, Mr. James Barber. In the year 1861 they formed a partnership and purchased the butchering business then being conducted by Mr. G. H. Luxford, at the corner of Willis Street and Lambton Quay. It was about this time that the Shaw, Savill & Albion Co. commenced sending their sailing ships here, and this old-established business has had contact with them ever since.

MESSRS. BARBER & CO. ARE PURVEYORS TO THE LUXURY LINER
“Dominion Monarch”
the latest addition to the Shaw, Savill Fleet, and many other
merchant vessels.
Telephone 44-088. Telephone 44-088.

Advertisement in the Evening Post, 25 March 1939



James Otho Barber married Elizabeth Southee (*pictured left, from a genealogical website*) on 20 August 1862 at St James Church, Lower Hutt. Elizabeth had been born at sea on 16 February 1841 while the Southee family were *en route* to Wellington on the *Lady Nugent*. Her younger sister, Eliza Southee, born in 1844, married George Fitchett in 1864. Henry Barber married Phillippa Jane Knight in 1867, and their first child, Edward Daniel Barber, was born in 1869.

Tragedy struck the family on 29 August 1868 when Elizabeth and James Otho's two-year-old son William James Barber died, and became the first burial in what was to become the family burial plot, designated 47.M of the Public Cemetery. Young William James was soon followed by his cousin, Alice Jane Brockman Fitchett, aged just 5 months, on 25 September 1869. (Alice was a daughter of Elizabeth's younger sister Eliza, who had married George Fitchett in 1846).

Meanwhile, the business of J & H Barber seemed to be thriving, with a new branch opening in Thorndon (Molesworth Street) in 1867, and extensive alterations and additions being made in 1871. Also in 1871 Otho Barber, family patriarch, died at son Henry's residence, Molesworth Street, on 31 May 1871, and was buried in plot 47.M on 2 June.

1873 was another very tragic year for the family. On 15 January, Elizabeth Barber died, apparently from complications of childbirth of twins James and Lizzy, who both also died – James aged 11 days and Lizzy aged 15 days. All three were buried in plot 47.M.

The business of J & H Barber and Co. continued to expand with a third shop opening in Tory Street in 1875, and in 1878 there were more extensions and renovations. The Molesworth Street business was sold in 1880, but new premises opened on the corner of Ingestre (now Vivian) and Cuba Streets in 1880. In 1882 or 1883 the company sold out to the Wellington Meat Co (later the Wellington Meat Export Co), but it seems the Barbers had interests in that business. (They were still operating their own shops for a time in 1883).

Early in 1895, the Central Meat Mart, run by Mr Rigalsford Jnr, opened in the former J & H Barber premises on the corner of Lambton Quay and Willis St, and soon after, James Barber established Barber & Co, butchers, in partnership with another brother, Edward, at a new premises at 137 Lambton Quay. Edward died in March 1899 and was buried in the St James churchyard, Lower Hutt. James Otho died on 19 March 1901 and was buried in plot 47.M at Bolton Street on 21 March, and Henry died in May 1905 at the age of 68, and was buried at Karori Cemetery. But the business of Barber and Co continued, under the management of Edward Daniel Barber, son of Henry and Phillippa Jane Barber.

In 1937 Barber and Co. moved to 174A Lambton Quay, and operated there (where the south corner of Farmers Lane is today) until the death of Edward Daniel Barber at the age of 74 on 2 January 1945. Edward Daniel was cremated at Karori on 4 January.

On 11 February 1969 the large grave of the Barber family at plot 47.M of the Public Cemetery was disinterred for the motorway, and its occupants were transferred to the Memorial Grave. Without the photo taken by Sexton Shotter (*shown below*), we would have no information about the grave or the inscription. While Henry has a handsome monument at Karori, of the former grave of the Barbers at Bolton Street Cemetery, there is absolutely no trace. If any descendants have the headstone, we would love to have it back!



The Barber family grave shown above in the photo by P J E Shotter, c1968; with detail of headstone at left.

Courtesy Alexander Turnbull Library, Ref 35mm-25557-33A-F

Fortunately, the Sexton, Mr P J E Shotter, had taken an excellent photo of plot 47.M in the late 1960s when he tried to photograph every grave destined to be removed (for the motorway) that was still visible at that time.

Our burial records had given us the information that seven burials of members of the Barber family had been recorded for this plot 47.M, but we had no information other than names and dates.

The large family grave had a marble plaque, and the full inscription on the plaque is legible in Mr Shotter's photo on the National Library website. I have made a transcript.

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF

WILLIAM JAMES BARBER
DIED AUGT. 31, 1871
AGED 5 YEARS.

ALSO ALICE JANE FITCHETT
COUSIN OF THE ABOVE
DIED SEPTR 25, 1869
AGED 6 MONTHS.

ALSO OTHO BARBER
DIED MAY 31, 1871
AGED 63 YEARS.

ALSO ELIZABETH BARBER
*THE BELOVED WIFE OF JAMES,
SON OF OTHO BARBER,*
DIED JANY 15, 1873
AGED 33 YEARS.

ALSO JAMES AND LIZZY,
INFANT CHILDREN OF THE ABOVE
JAMES & ELIZABETH BARBER,
AGED 14 DAYS.

ALSO JAMES OTHO BARBER
HUSBAND AND FATHER OF THE ABOVE
DIED MARCH 19, 1901
AGED 68 YEARS.

Checking the details using *Papers Past*, NZ BDM Historical Records on-line, the Public Cemetery Register and genealogical resources, indicated a few errors on this inscription on the headstone, and there are also some errors in the Public Cemetery Register. Firstly, William James Barber was aged 2 years when he died on 29 August 1868. He was the fourth child and 3rd son born to James Otho Barber and his wife Elizabeth, née Southee. Secondly, Elizabeth Barber was recorded wrongly in the Public Cemetery Register as Isabella, which is how she had appeared in our burial list, although her death record and the headstone are in agreement that her name was Elizabeth. Thirdly, the infants James and Lizzy, who died aged 14 days were actually, according to BDM, James who died on 26 January 1873 aged 11 days, and Lizzy on 29 January aged 15 days. Their mother, Elizabeth, had died on 15th January 1873, probably from complications from giving birth to twins.

These corrections have been made to our burial list, and I have added my headstone transcript and the Shotter photo of the grave to their records on our website.

We are also now able to confirm a description of the original grave shown above: clearly a substantial structure with a large marble plaque recording the names of the seven occupants, mounted on a headstone of what appears to be grey granite.

Nick Perrin

WWI MEMORIAL WALK (SELF-GUIDED TOUR)

To commemorate Remembrance Day on 11 November, white crosses with poppies have been placed in the cemetery beside the 17 graves where the servicemen who enlisted and fought in World War I are named on the headstones of family members.

Pick up a leaflet with a map in the Museum, or download one off our website, and enjoy strolling with friends or family through the cemetery to find these locations.



INTRODUCING CHRISTINE HARPER

When Jenny Button stepped down after six years of leading the Friends, Christine was elected at this year's AGM on 6 July. Our new President tells us about herself.



After many years of walking through the cemetery I joined the Friends in 2020. The working bees were a practical (and fun) way to connect with the cemetery so before long, I put my hand up to help co-ordinate and I joined the committee formally in 2023. Now as President, I will happily continue as organiser of the working bees, but I also welcome some new challenges.

It's been a steep learning curve to expand my concerns from weeding and cleaning to taking an overview of the full range of Friends interests in the role of President. I'm lucky to be able to rely on the expertise and talents of a great committee and I enjoy the diverse activities of the Friends enormously.

Until earlier this year my career in marketing, relationship management and business support took all my energy – and it's timely

to step up responsibilities for the things I love since giving up the 9-5 job.

As well as wielding a trowel at working bees, I am enjoying taking more time for creative projects: volunteering at Wai-te-ata Press, growing vegetables at Tanera Park, taking photos, experimenting in the kitchen, trips to the beach and spending time with family, cycling or walking in the hills.

Christine Harper

Photo by Kate Fortune

COMMITTEE LIST 2024–25

Christine Harper <i>President</i>	Policy & strategies, Working bees
David Dunsheath <i>Vice President</i>	Constitutional Review
Kate Fortune <i>Treasurer, Secretary</i>	Membership, Guide, Newsletter editor
Elizabeth Fletcher	Minutes Secretary
Peter McHardy	Conservation & repairs
Barbara Mulligan	Tours support, Guide
Nick Perrin QSM	Biographical & burial list, Research
Anne Phillips	Daffodil project, Constitutional Review

FLIGHT BY RITA ANGUS AND THE BSC MUSEUM

Visitors to the Bolton Street Cemetery Museum just below 26 Bolton Street, Wellington, will find a peaceful, calm and non-confrontational introduction to the post-colonial history of Wellington. Attention is certain to be captured by the museum's focal point: a replica of the painting called *Flight*, 1968-69, a work by the New Zealand artist Rita Angus (1908-1970). The original work is held in the national collection at Te Papa Tongarewa National Museum of New Zealand, but this is an approved copy.

In *Flight* Angus captures the dismantled, stacked memorials taken from the Bolton Street cemetery. The painting is anchored by a dove in flight trailing a stone ribbon in its beak. The Makara hills are visible in the distance with the Cook Strait fishing boats anchored on a calm blue sea.



Left: The Museum's focal point: the painting called Flight, 1968-69, by Rita Angus; and above: the reproduction. Below: Sketch by Rita Angus, from Bolton Street Cemetery sketchbook 1968-69. Courtesy Te Papa and the Angus family.

One of Angus's last paintings, this is a masterpiece, the work of a mature artist. The visitor is able to consider the work in detail: noting the artist's careful observation of all of its elements, her skilled representation of this country's blazing light and untamed landscape, and her subtle use of symbolism. The painting shows the mystery of life and death. Like all great mysteries there are many different interpretations of the artist's intentions.

At the heart of *Flight* is the stone bird flying over Cook Strait. Where did the artist get her inspiration? What message was the stone dove conveying to the viewer? What was the dove's connection with the stacked pile of headstones and Bolton Street Cemetery? Why did the artist add a second realistic bird?



A casual walk around the cemetery confirms that doves are used as symbols on many memorials. BSC historian, Nick Perrin, observed that there are “a lot of them on tombstones; I can picture half a dozen off the top of my head.” At least four of these are on graves (Duff, Gibb, Goldfinch and Isaacs) that were not destroyed by bulldozers; but two other tombstones with doves (Birrel and Richardson/Waters) were removed from their graves and stored in Thorndon very near Rita’s home. Her sketchbooks have several doves, including the two on the John Birrel memorial. One is a dove plucking a ribbon (on a cross) and the second bird has something in its mouth.

But Nick Perrin refutes the theory that John Birrel’s memorial provided the inspiration for the Rita Angus bird, confident that it is located on the Richardson/Waters monument. Perrin claimed, “It lost its head after Rita Angus sketched it and painted it in *Flight*.” In a homage to the power of *Flight*, Perrin reports that he, together with John Daniels, searched for the Angus bird for months. Perrin wrote, “During a working bee John Daniels was up a ladder cleaning the Richardson/Waters monument (the second largest in the cemetery) and I looked up and saw the dove minus its head. I am quite proud of that discovery.”



A white dove has been used as a symbol of peace, love and hope in many cultures and religions. Doves on headstones in the BSC cemetery include, from left, on the BIRREL cross; the BIRREL plinth; the DUFF headstone; and the RICHARDSON/WATERS headstone, at the base of the large cross. Photos: Kate Fortune

Wellington can be proud of how Angus turned a period of personal despair into a powerful work of art. *Flight* commemorates a time of personal and contextual turmoil. In July 1968 her father, William McKenzie Angus, died. The Vietnam War had divided the country and caused her great personal distress. In 1969 her health deteriorated to the point of hospitalisation four months after *Flight* was completed. The artist’s sense of her world being upended was heightened with the destruction of the Bolton Street Cemetery. This upheaval was visible from her home in Sydney Street, Thorndon.

The Bolton Street Cemetery had closed to the public in 1968 in order to start its ‘redevelopment’: officialese for the destruction, dismantling and disinterment within the cemetery. The former Ministry of Works had long planned to put State Highway 1 through the cemetery. Despite the formation of the Bolton Street Cemetery Preservation Society in 1964 with the specific aim of “preserving Bolton Street Cemetery within its present boundaries free from the encroachment of any motorway or other public work as an open space for public enjoyment and relaxation”, the Society faced insurmountable odds.

The urban motorway was in the national interest. It had a commitment from the Government and the Wellington City Council to take all steps necessary to overcome opposition from relatives of the deceased, the community in Thorndon and the wider public. The archival record for this period in the cemetery's history makes grim reading.

With unbending opposition to any proposal to dismantle the cemetery, Rita Angus set to work. From 1967, she and fellow artist, Juliet Peter, began weekly sketching expeditions to Bolton Street Cemetery, later slipping under the temporary fencing on Sundays and filling sketchbooks with their drawings. As a result of their work, memorials on the brink of destruction have acquired an elevated status. The delicate line, sensitive exploration and evocative detail of Angus's drawings and watercolours shows her depth of feeling at the demolition of history achieved by May 1969.

Flight, 1968-69, is not only a personal and contextual record, it is also a talisman of fearlessness and courage. Her biographer, Jill Trevelyan, has described Rita Angus as an austere, disciplined and often exacting woman. Angus's belief in her vocation and her religious philosophy sustained her through any personal obstacles. Her exceptional qualities of character are apparent in the painting.

Lara Simmons, who led the project team for the restoration of the Bolton Street Cemetery Museum, has described her first reaction to *Flight*. Simmons recorded her first impressions as follows: "On my first tour of Bolton Street Cemetery, Kate Fortune held up a picture of Rita Angus's painting *Flight* in the replica chapel space. As I had recently bought my house in Houghton Bay, I was immediately drawn to the colourful fishing boats. ... As I came to understand the history of the cemetery and the painting more, I was struck by the disruption of a peaceful moment with the alarm of seeing the scrub fire."

In a tribute to *Flight* as a masterpiece, Simmons continued: "With this new understanding of its meaning the painting has a much more dynamic feeling. To me it embodies a disruption of peace. It deserved its place as a 'hero object' in the exhibition where all visitors to the museum can see Rita's masterpiece."

The Friends of Bolton Street Cemetery and the Wellington City Council are grateful to the Rita Angus Trust (Warwick and Bill Angus in particular) for permission to reproduce the painting in the Museum. For this story, I also thank Lara Simmons and Nick Perrin, and I acknowledge the late Priscilla Williams, who researched the notebooks of Rita Angus and Juliet Peters, and wrote tour notes for 'Rita Angus and the Bolton Street Cemetery'.

Anne Phillips

Further reading:

For an online copy of *Flight*: <https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/43394>

For the official online biography of Rita Angus see:

Jill Trevelyan: 'Angus, Rita', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, first published in 2000, updated May, 2015. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, [Angus, Rita – Dictionary of New Zealand Biography – Te Ara](#) (accessed 30 October 2024).

CONSERVATION & REPAIRS 23/24

The funding for our repair programme by the Wellington City Council was once again substantially allocated to restoration work on the NANCARROW grave on the Anzac Path (L10 05) which is at last almost completed. Greg Cairns, Public Arts & Heritage Specialist for the Wellington City Council, is managing this project.

Right: The front brick wall on the NANCARROW grave has been repaired and the iron railings will be back in place before the end of the year

Photo: Kate Fortune

Having lost the extraordinary depth of heritage knowledge and experience of former committee member, the late Priscilla Williams in June, we are pleased to advise that this role on the Friends' committee to liaise with Greg Cairns on the Conservation & Repairs programme has just been taken over by **Peter McHardy**, who will resume the annual reports for the newsletter next year. We are all really grateful to Peter for stepping up.



WORKING BEES

I know that joining Sunday working bees is not feasible for busy families and people with other weekend commitments. We could consider some other options in 2025 if we can identify alternative times that would be suitable. If the Sunday sessions don't work for you but you want to get involved, please drop me a line and let me know:

1. What days of the week would be good for you to join a working bee?
2. What times of the day are most suitable for you?
3. While we currently focus on weeding graves and cleaning headstones, there may be other ways that you could help, so do tell me if there's anything you have noticed or thought about on a walk through the cemetery.

Christine Harper

HERITAGE DAFFODILS ON DISPLAY

Evidence of the popularity of daffodils in early Wellington is plentiful. Annual spring flower shows, held in Wellington as early as 1880, awarded trophies for the best trumpet daffodil. In 1898, the Wellington Horticultural Society's show was dedicated entirely to daffodils. Exhibition of prize blooms attracted extravagant praise. In 1934, the *Evening Post* described the large crowds attending 'A Floral Feast', the spring flower show held in the Wellington Town Hall. The newspaper reporter abandoned detachment and described: "*Hundreds and hundreds of stately daffodils raising their heads in long rows, and to the expert and amateur alike they made mute appeal.*" The two-day show was opened by Governor-General Lord Bledisloe, who said (with truly wonderful alliteration) "*He must indeed be a dull dolt who does not derive delight from this dazzling display of delicious daffodils.*" (*Evening Post*, 20 Sept 1934)

In recent times daffodils have acquired a fresh purpose as the symbol of hope for people with cancer. As the emblem of renewal, recovery and regeneration the golden daffodil has been adopted by Cancer Society of New Zealand. Its Daffodil Day fundraising appeal successfully champions these heritage flowers every September.

The Bolton Street Cemetery, with its historic memorials, central city location and dedicated horticulturalists, is home to a remarkable collection of heritage daffodils. During September, that "mute appeal" of daffodils still attracts public admiration and generates countless photographs and posts on social media. The blooms emerge from winter and brighten the cemetery, appearing in vast quantities with their unique shapes, lustrous colours and nostalgic appeal. Spring visitors clearly appreciate the golden nodding heads on display.

But forlorn or neglected daffodils do nothing to raise the spirits. The display of perfect daffodils is a combination of science and art. The cemetery's damp winters, heavy winter rainfall and clay soil mean that in late autumn, daffodil bulbs flourish only with the close attention of expert Botanic Garden horticulturalists. The remarkable annual display in the cemetery relies on preparation of the ground, annual ordering of bulbs and carefully planned work schedules.

The first three photographs (*see below, page 12*) show the heritage daffodils of the cemetery in full bloom. But to focus only on the glorious display of daffodils would be misleading. For a spring display that cheers the saddest heart, the amateur gardener and the professional horticulturist alike put all their efforts into turning the soil, enriching it by aerating and fertilising before planting bulbs.

In the second two photographs, the Heritage Gardens team is shown planting heritage bulbs in the cemetery. The daffodil project of the Friends of the Bolton Street Cemetery began as a vision inspired by Wordsworth's famous poem about "*a crowd, / a host, of golden daffodils.*" These images, however, showing horticulturalists hard at work in the cemetery, tell a truer story: making the imaginary real involves hard work. Despite the heavy, root-bound soil in the cemetery the enjoyment at being outdoors and the satisfaction of planting is evident. Note also the nuanced signs that this is a professional gardening team.

Anne Phillips

HERITAGE DAFFODILS ON DISPLAY



Daffodils in full bloom in September – and two scenes showing the expertise and hard work needed to prepare for the eventual display.

Photos supplied by Kai Yuan, Heritage Gardens Team Leader

