



AROUND THE GRAVES

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William Ruse—Fact or Fiction?

In Fairlie Taylor's (d 1983) autobiography *Bid Time Return* (1970), she writes of her grandfather William Ruse's (d 1900) role in having land set aside for the Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery;

"Our meeting place was the old cemetery where, as a child, I had won my hard-earned sixpence by going alone at night to look for the ghost. It was my grandfather [William] Ruse who had acquired the land for that cemetery, in 1860". (p122)

Whilst the origins of the Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery is shrouded in mystery and undoubtedly many of the leading men of the time—including William Ruse—played important roles that led to its establishment in 1864, there is no evidence to suggest that Ruse acquired the land.

We know that the Spring Reserve on which the Cemetery is

located was Crown land. Indeed, the local state school, as well as land for the Methodist and Presbyterian churches and the market yard were all provided with land set aside within Spring Reserve.

Further, Ruse's name does not appear on the Moorabbin Parish Plan (VPRS 16171) showing

the names of the original land owners. The Plan is clear that Spring Reserve was never privately owned.

(Source: Taylor, F., "Bid Time Return" (1977) p122 and research by Joan Hunt, FRHSV Feb 2010)

above:

Gravesite of the Ruse family where Fairlie Taylor lies interred – CofC "A" 20-21



The Case of Francis Flynn

Before Messrs C Rogers, M Clements, F Le Page and J Caudwell JPs, Francis (Frank) William Flynn of Mentone fronted the Cheltenham Court in May 1927 charged with having used obscene language. The case had a twist when the arresting police constable, R Christopherson was also charged with assault when Flynn was being apprehended. The case was unusual for the fact that both men at the same court hearing were defending their conduct while testifying against the other. Also unusual was that a serving policeman would face a civil court on a disciplinary issue.

The Court heard that Flynn and a group of young men were jostling about in the porch near the booking office of the Mentone railway station. When Christopherson arrived, Flynn warned the men that complaints had been made when it was alleged Flynn used obscene language. He was threatened with arrest and used further language. Flynn told the court the constable assaulted him after his arrest.

Both men were found guilty and fined £1 with no costs allowed. Born on 5 November 1901, Francis Flynn went on to serve his country in World War II with the 4 Australian Cipher Section (1942-46) and died in April 1971 aged 69. He was buried with his parents and brother Stanley (1909-87) in the Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery (Pres "70" 1A). The headstone inscription reads:

"In loving memory of / our dear father and mother / Patrick Augustus / passed away 24th Oct 1928 aged 64 years / Sarah Ann / passed away 5th March 1948 aged 70 years / peacefully at rest / FLYNN"

(Source: *The Argus* 9 Jun 1927 p17; WWII Nominal Roll—www.ww2roll.gov.au)

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Madcap Mary: A Hardy Life

"Mary Hardy, in her trademark turban and with a flamboyant scarf around her neck, was to make a presentation to the female owner of the winning greyhound. With feigned innocence, Mary glanced at the overdressed owner of the prize-winning dog, turned directly to the Channel 7 camera and said, 'To which bitch do I present the prize?'".

The early years of the Australian television industry was characterised by the lack of female personalities. On stage, they were a dozen a dime; but on screen they were there to be seen, not heard. That was until the cauterising wit of Mary Veronica Hardy (1931-85), came on the scene like a breath of fresh air and rewrote the rules...females could still be a barrel or weather girl, or they could make the world laugh like Mary Hardy. More than any other individual, she led the way for a generation of female entertainers to shine on screen. But like many great figures, there was another side to the public persona; the 20 years at the top during the 1960s and '70s were followed by five on the bottom living as a recluse before her untimely death.

Except for the poverty, Mary's was a happy, idyllic childhood. Ever since she saw her first movie at the Astor Theatre in Bacchus Marsh, Hardy wanted to be a star of the screen. It was the one constant throughout her childhood.

In 1950, she joined the repertory company, the Ethna Players. Then followed seven years working for the theatrical entrepreneur Garnet Hannell Carroll (1902-64). Carroll owned Melbourne's Princess Theatre and it was in the lead role in *Peter Pan* (1957) that Mary first came to the notice of the wider public. Her performance during one show became a theatrical legend among her peers and the story is folklore depending on the variant. Whether it was in reprisal for her penchant for practical jokes or a genuine mechanical breakdown, Hardy found herself high above the stage swinging on a suspended trapeze. The equipment 'failed' and in unladylike fashion she yelled "Get me down orf here, you pack of bastards!". The kids in the audience were said to have been delighted at the unexpected spice, but not so the mortified parents.

For Hardy, her years of moonlighting in revue shows proved to be the ideal training ground for her foray into television and enabled her to sharpen her wit as a comedienne. And it came from her former co-star with the Union Theatre, Noel Ferrier who offered her a part on his Friday night show, *In Melbourne Tonight with Noel Ferrier* (1963-65). Stylistically different to the popular *In Melbourne Tonight*

(1957-70), the show "withered on the vine". Though Hardy's time on the program was short, it opened the door to her biggest break to work with none other than The King of Australian television, Graham Cyril Kennedy, AO (1934-2005).

In 1970, Channel 7 offered Hardy a role as co-host of a new Saturday night variety show called *The Penthouse Club* with Mike Williamson (b 1932), famous for his football commentary ("Jesaulenko, you beauty!"). The program was uniquely Melbourne. A mix of trots and talk with Hardy often stealing the show due to her relentless ability to talk and ad-lib, *Penthouse* was an eclectic and fast-paced mix of interviews, live acts, comedy, light entertainment, racing gossip and later, the weekly Tattsлото segment.

The public persona of Mary Hardy was in stark contrast to her private side and the inner demons she fought against. As a child her mood swings were considered just part of the attractive facet of her funny girl nature. The beginning of the end of Mary Veronica Hardy came in 1975. First there was the strain of having uttered the magical word on live television which saw her suspended indefinitely. And then in September, her 12-year marriage to Ian Pearce ended in divorce and it was believed Hardy first attempted suicide.

Melburnians who came to love their Mary, the entertainer who made them laugh like no other, the talkback host who shared an affinity with them awoke on the morning of 8 January 1985 to the headlines "MARY DEAD" and "MARY SUICIDES". The shot-gun by her side was testimony of the straightforward and uncompromising way she treated death just as she lived life – without fanfare. When you are as famous as Mary Hardy – even after three years out of the limelight – no surname is necessary. Vale Mary Veronica Hardy and her cauterising wit that made the world laugh.

Members can download the entire 9,700 word article on Madcap Mary for free from the Members' Area of our website: www.focrc.org/members.htm.



above:
Star of the stage...Mary Hardy pictured in 1960.
(Newspaper Collection, State Library of Victoria)