



AROUND THE GRAVES

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NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF CHELTENHAM AND REGIONAL CEMETERIES INC.

Cheltenham Christ Church

It was no mere boasting back in 1903 when the history of the Christ Church in Australasia wrote of Cheltenham, that *“although there are several sectarian churches about, the Church of Christ has the largest building, the largest school, and the largest congregation”*. The history of the local churches has relevance to the history of the Cheltenham cemeteries; both are intertwined. The Christ Church of Cheltenham dates back as early as 1850 when **James Keir** (CofC “A” 1) and his wife Catherine from Crossfields, Scotland came to live in Point Nepean Road,



(above)

The family grave of James and Catherine Keir—Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery (CofC “A” 1-2)

South Brighton. With no church nearby, they celebrated the “Lord’s supper” in their home. Not far from the Keirs lived another settler, **Thomas Walker** (CofC “A” 19) who also held religious meetings in a prefabricated cottage. With others, they formed what became known as the

Chesterville group and included the families of **William Ruse** (CofC “A” 20), **William Sears** (CofC “A” 78), **John Brough** (CofC “A” 29), **Nicholas Le Page** (CofC “A” 75), **Walter Meeres** (CofC “A” 19) and **Thomas Penny** (CofC “A” 73).

In the south of the district, **Samuel Judd** (CofC “A” 83) was at the forefront of what became known as the Beaumaris group attracting adherents using a farm cart as the pulpit. The group believed in baptism by total immersion and would later meet at the home of Stephen and **Mary Charman** (CofC “A” 7). The Beaumaris group included the families of **James Moysey** (CofC “A” 17), **Elias Hayes** (CofC “A” 50) and **George Bodley** (CofC “A” 24) who would later serve as a Cemetery Trustee for many years (1874-1912).

In 1861, **William Ruse** (q.v.) donated land in Charman

Road where a wooden chapel was built, later enlarged in 1866. It was this building that became the home for both groups.

Those living in the north and east of the district desired a more central location; in 1875, Sunday services were held at the Mechanics’ Institute on Point Nepean Road.

Three years later, the distinct chapel on the small hill on the corner of Chesterville and Point Nepean Road was constructed at a cost of £805; **John Brough** (q.v.) was the architect while his daughter-in-law **Mary Brough** (CofC “A” 30) laid the foundation stone.

In 1903, the *Jubilee Pictorial History of Churches of Christ in Australasia* was published and included a photo (pictured above) of officers of the Cheltenham Christ Church. Pictured top row (left to right) are **Henry Foreman** (CofC “C” 25), **Richard Judd** (CofC “A” 37), **William Woff** (CofC “A” 86), S Organ. Bottom row, **William Judd** (CofC “42A” 22), **Robert Tuck** (CofC “A” 22), H Mahon, **William Barnett** (CofC “42A” 2) and J Fisher. The author noted;

“The church has been established for 46 years, and during that time they have been laboring among them as Evangelists some valiant soldiers of the cross. Well do they remember Bren. Strang, Moysey, Bryant, Chapham, Goodacre, Pittman, Green and Judd...Of the original stock who have labored long with patience and with love, many have gone to receive their reward. But they have still with them Bren. Keir, Organ and Fisher, also Sisters Le Page, and Meeres, a daughter of Bro. Walker, both of whom joined the church in the early days...’They rest from their labors, and their works do follow them’.”

(Source: Maston, A. B., *“Jubilee Pictorial History of Churches of Christ in Australasia”* (1903) p290-291)



(above)

Officers of the Cheltenham Christ Church

(Maston, A. B., *“Jubilee Pictorial History of Churches of Christ in Australasia”* (1903) p290)

Bill Williamson and Dalray

For the 150th running of the Melbourne Cup this year, 24 legends have been chosen in what is being billed as "The Greatest Cup Never Run". Amongst the virtual runners are *Phar Lap* (1930), *Makybe Diva* (2003-05), *Think Big* (1974-75) and *Rain Lover* (1968-69). One horse that caught our eye and is worth a 'virtual' punt is the 1952 winner *Dalray*

ridden by Bill Williamson. Outstanding in NZ as a three year-old, the Clarrie McCarthy trained *Dalray* won two Derbys and the AJC Metropolitan Handicap before his triumph in the Cup. And it wasn't just any win, but one of the greatest in the history of the race when he came from the tail of the field to win half-a-length from 200-to-1 outsider *Welkin Sun*. It was indeed a master ride from Williamson; carrying 9.8 pounds, when *Phar Lap* won in 1930, the gelding carried a penalty of 9.2.

William James Williamson (1922-79) was one of Australia's greatest jockeys known as 'Weary Willie' for his sleepy-eyed and laconic expression. Described by the

legendary English jockey Lester Piggott as "the best big-race jockey in the world", when asked why he rarely smiled, Williamson said "because half an hour later I might be an also-ran and sorry I smiled!"

Hear about Bill Williamson on our '75 Years On' tour of the Cheltenham Memorial Park (Wangara Road).

Sunday 31 October 2010 at 2.00pm. Bookings essential.

Book on-line www.focrc.org/tours.htm

or ring Vivienne on 03 5420 7671.

(Source: *The Argus* 5 Nov 1951 p1)

James Walker and 'The Brain'

'Mostly Murders' is our newest tour of the Cheltenham Memorial Park featuring stories of murders and tragic deaths. Amongst those featured on the tour is James Robert Walker (1911-54) the youngest of ten children to Joseph Walker and Maggie n e Swanson (d 1946). At his criminal and physical prime, Walker was a feared

underworld figure in the 1930s. Now, long before Mark Brandon 'Chopper' Read made it fashionable for crims to write about crime, Walker penned his life story while behind bars in Pentridge Prison having pleaded to authorities to hang after being found guilty of the murder of Thomas John Fogarty (Necropolis Botanical Cemetery). In what was the scoop of the year, *The Argus* published the 100 handwritten sheets each marked with Walker's fingerprints. Here is an extract in which Walker talks about the man he called 'The Brain';

"*The Brain*' was a man who loved, and got great pleasure out of being in good standing with the Underworld, especially 'the strength.' He was a born philosopher. He learnt early in life the wisdom that 'the tongue is mightier than the sword'. He once told me Snowy Cutmore and Squizzy Taylor were dead only because he couldn't get there in time to pour oil on the troubled waters! Tears came to his eyes, and I kind of choked up a little myself...

I once thought I had reason to kill 'The Brain', who was staying in Sydney on a holiday. I went to the place in Coogee where he was staying to do so. He answered the door. I covered him with the rod [gun] and told him to step out and get in the car. He did so, and I told him to drive down to the Cliffs. But we never even got started.

By the time 'The Brain' got through talking—which was about two hours—I really felt like putting the rod to my own head and blowing the works. Just to show me he had no ill-feeling about me for coming to kill him, he drove me down to the shop and bought me a double chocolate icecream. Yes, sir, 'The Brain' was a great guy."

When Walker's death sentence was commuted by the Executive Council to life imprisonment (the Cain Labor Government was opposed to the death penalty), Walker then began his plan the murder of four officials and four prisoners...

Come along to our **NEW** 'Mostly Murders' tour of the Cheltenham Memorial Park (Wangara Road).

Sunday 10 October and 31 October 2010 at 11.00am.

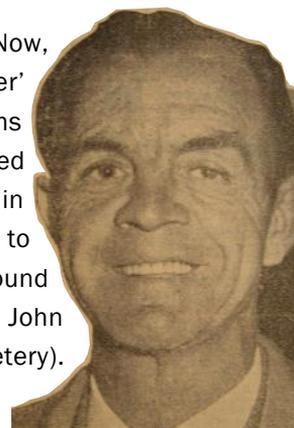
Bookings essential. Book on-line www.focrc.org/tours.htm or ring Vivienne on 03 5420 7671.

(Source: *The Argus* 20 Sep 1954 p8)



(above)

Bill Williamson who is buried in the Cheltenham Memorial Park (Memorial Lawn "31" 13)



(above)

The smiling assassin—James Robert Walker

(Newspaper Collection, State Library of Victoria)