

1950 K.R. Von Stieglitz

CHURCH OF ENGLAND BURIAL GROUND

Cypress Street, Launceston

Launceston's first burial ground covered about an acre of land on Windmill Hill. It lay on the higher side of the area contained within the angle formed by York, High and Brisbane Streets. Henry Button mentions this and the late Dr. G.H. Hogg assured me that it was correct.

The York Street cemetery seems to have been closed during the late twenties of the last (19th) century, apparently because Launceston was beginning to grow up the hill in that direction, and a bank, on the then outskirts of the town, looking out over the flats of the North Esk, quiet and peaceful, became the last resting place of many of our northern pioneers.

Although the oldest headstone in Cypress Street Cemetery is "In memory of John Tildesley, who departed this life on the 26th June 1811, in the 10th year of his age", it may have been brought down there from the York Street burial ground for some reason or other, but of this there is no proof except a later entry in the interment book against this name of "to tombstone only".

Unfortunately, a great number of headstones are now practically illegible, broken or taken away altogether. Among the latter is that of Dr. Jacob Mountgarrett R.N. He was the first to come to van Diemen's Land and was also one of the first explorers both in the South and the North. His northern adventures started when he came to Port Dalrymple with Colonel Paterson, Surgeon Mountgarrett died at the age of 55 in Launceston on the 27th of January, 1828 and is buried in the Cypress Street cemetery. His wife, of whom we know nothing, except that her name was Bridget, was buried beside him a year later.

Another burial here, but of which the headstone is missing, was that of Evan Henry Thomas, Tasmania's first litterateur, and, as Professor Morris Miller tells us, the first to publish a drama in Australia. E.H. Thomas arrived at Hobart Town on the 19th of August, 1822 in the ship . "William Shand". At this time he was only twenty years of age. Born in Antrim, Ireland, he married, soon after coming to Tasmania, Sarah Wallis, a widow whose sister, Rebecca, also a widow, married James Haydock Reibey. These two women, whose maiden name had been Devine, do not seem to have been in the first flight of Hobart Town society. At the time of their marriage, James Reibey was one of Launceston's first and most important merchants. It was he who built the first stone jetty in the town, not far from the entrance to the Gorge. James Reibey and his wife, Rebecca, lie side by side in the Reibey vault. E.H. Thomas was the editor of the Hobart Town Gazette during 1824-5 under the proprietorship of Andrew Best, our first town publisher.

After Governor Authur's condemnation of Thomas' leading articles in favour of a free press, he came to live in Launceston. In this he was influenced by his brother-in-law J.H. Reibey. After a trip back to the old country, he held various other positions in Van Diemen's Land and began to contribute to the *Launceston Independent*. In 1835 he published his play "The Bandit of the Rhine" which was staged both in Launceston and Hobart. E.H. Thomas died in 1837 at the age of 36 years and was buried here.

At the far end of the cemetery, near the big pine trees, we shall see the grave of the Reverend John Youl, the founder of this family in Tasmania and the first resident clergyman in the North of the Island. He had come as a missionary to islands in the Pacific but as the position there was untenable he went to New South Wales where he had a school at Ebenezer. Some years later he came on the 28th December, 1818 to Van Diemen's Land, returning again in November 1819 to take up duties as the first chaplain to George Town whence he visited Launceston undertaking religious services. Everyone has heard how he used to call his flock together for their devotions by beating an iron barrel with a mallet or by walking through the little village of Launceston in his surplice. Both Launceston and Hobart were known as "The Camp" in those days. Acting under Governor Macquarie's very definite instructions, George Town and not Launceston was to be the headquarters of the Northern settlement. But the great Macquarie went away from Australia in 1821 to die almost alone in

London. Mr. Youl was the officiating chaplain and lived to see Governor Arthur lay the foundation stone of a church on the 28th December, 1824 which was later to be called St. John's, with aspirations towards being the cathedral of the North. Services before that time had been held in an old wooden shanty in which a blacksmith carried on his trade. Mr Youl died at the age of fifty and was buried in 1827.

Not far from Mr. Youl's grave and that of the Reibey's is the flat stone which records the deaths of Bartholomew Boyle Thomas and his manager at North Down, James Parker. The story of how these two men were cruelly murdered when they attempted to pacify the Big River Tribe of blacks which had moved into the district is well known. The simple stone is a memorial of this.

Richard Dry, an educated Irish expatriate, is also buried here. He was the father of the famous Sir Richard Dry of Quamby and of the Rev. William Dry, whose fine home, Mount Esk, at St. Leonards, is still standing in perfect condition. As Mr. Richard Dry was officially a prisoner, land could not be granted to him so Elphin was actually granted to his wife. Dry, who was a very highly respected man, in spite of his unfortunate beginning, became Controller of Stores and Collector of Customs in Launceston. Sir Richard Dry, by the way, was buried in the church he founded at Hagley.

Peter Lette, mariner, who described himself as a "self-exile" probably wanted to make quite sure that there would be no mistake about why he came to Tasmania, and that it was of his own free will and desire. Curramore, at the White Hills, was his delightful old home.

Norfolk Piper's grave records the end of Hugh Piper's son. His mother became at her second marriage, the wife of David Gibson of Pleasant Banks at Evandale where she is buried in the Presbyterian cemetery with her husband. Point Piper in Sydney was so named in honour of Norfolk Piper's father.

David Rose, the government stockkeeper from 1811 is also here. His house, Corra Linn at Relbia, is still standing although it is probably the oldest inhabited house in Tasmania.

Thomas Henty, father of the founder of Victoria, sent three of his sons to the Swan River (As the first settlement in Western Australia was called) to make preparations for the... [at least 1 line missing here]

...barren spot they moved to Van Diemen's Land. Some years later, Henty senior, who is described as a banker and gentleman farmer of West Tarring in Essex, came out with the rest of his family aboard his own chartered vessel the "Firth of Alloway", arriving in Launceston in 1831. In that same year his son Edward bought the whaling station owned by Henry Reed at Cape Portland in Victoria.

Thomas Henty brought a consignment of pure merino sheep blood horses, and a number of cattle with him. Unfortunately, Henty arrived just too late to be given a free grant of land as Governor Arthur had just been ordered by the Colonial Secretary in London to discontinue giving them. Henty, with some impetuosity, saddled one of his own blood horses and rode straight through to Hobart in order to plead the importance of his claims for free land but apparently this was in vain. He died on the 25th October, 1839 and Frances Elizabeth, his wife, followed him nine months later.

The Honourable Charles Meredith is remembered now mainly because his charming wife painted and wrote so well of her 'Home in Tasmania' in this and other books, revealing a cultured woman's reactions to conditions then prevailing in Van Diemen's Land. As Louisa Anne Twamley, she had married Charles Meredith in England and came with him as a bride to the East Coast. He came first to Tasmania ten years later with his parents in the old pioneer ship "Emerald". He was the first police magistrate at Port Sorell and was a member of the Legislature for 24 years and at the time of his death was acting as police magistrate in Launceston where he died in 1880. Meredith Range and Meredith Pass in the North East record the name of his family. The inscription on his tombstone reads -

"In action faithful and in honour clear
Who broke no promise served no private end
Who gained no fortune and who lost no friend."

We may well wonder how many people have been buried in this cemetery, Unfortunately, there is no way of finding out the truth in this matter but one of Launceston's well-known undertakers, whose family have had what may be termed "business connections" with Cypress Street for many years used to say that if anyone told him that there were 30,000 people buried there, he would think there had been more. Apparently even those parts of the cemetery which seem to be empty have been used in the past as it is difficult to dig anywhere without finding skulls or other bones.

During the smallpox epidemic in 1887 and the bubonic plague outbreak at the end of last century, Mr. Finney says that -the people were buried six deep on some days as no-one would handle the corpses willingly and the whole business was as hurried and quiet as it very well could be.

One of the graves we see is that of the second son of George Augustus Robinson, 'Poor dear Henry'. The bathos of this memorial is worthy of the annoyingly absurd names bestowed upon our Tasmanian aborigines by his father George Augustus Robinson - the Conciliator.

G.A. Robinson, as you all know, was the only man who could control the blacks in any way. He was a Hobart Town bricklayer who learnt their language, from the few aborigines ... [lacuna] ... in the capital, and he was commissioned by Governor ... [lacuna] ... Fortunately he had kept all his famous father's papers which were bought by the Government and are now in the Mitchell Library. George Augustus Robinson himself returned to England and settled at Bath in a house then called Prospect Villa. He nostalgically renamed it Prahran and died there on the 18th October, 1846. He was buried in the Abbey cemetery.

The last person to be buried in this cemetery was a Miss Coates in 1929 but by then the cemetery had already been closed for some time and this was only permitted as a special concession. I have read through all the lists which still exist of interments in this cemetery, and among other things I noticed that in the summer of 1853-4, which may have been a very hot one, no less than fifty-six children were buried here and for the same period only six adults. No other period seems to have been as lethal to young life as that one. Perhaps there was an outbreak of diphtheria or typhoid in that far off summer, against which evils our ancestors were powerless to protect themselves.

K.R. Von Stieglitz,

"Andora",

Evandale.

1 July, 1950.