

AROUND THE GRAVES

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NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF CHELTENHAM AND REGIONAL CEMETERIES INC.

In this special edition of *Around The Graves*, we focus on the family of **William Double (Dub) Rose** (1862-1946) and the undertaking firm of "W. D. Rose & Son".

A Bed of Roses

Three Rose brothers—**Thomas Doubell** (1824-97, CofC "A" 41), **William John** (c1830-62, Beaumaris Churchyard) and **James Moss** (1828-1910, Meth "E" 214)—were the sons of William and Ann Rose of Essex, England and settled in Cromer Road Beaumaris as market gardeners. Thomas was believed to have sailed on the *Mount Stuart Elphinstone* which arrived in Jul 1852 and married **Susanah née Male** (1837-1927, CofC "A" 41) on 26 Jun 1856. Eight of their ten children are buried in the Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery; **Jane Ruse née Rose** (1857-1906, CofC "A" 39), **James (Moss)** (1858-1939, CofC "A" 70), **William (Dub)** (1862-1946, Meth "17" 28), **Raymond** (1865-1915, Meth "33" 27), **Eliza McQueen née Rose** (1868-1900, Pres "B" 30), **Elizabeth** (b 1870), **Arthur** (b 1873), **George** (1875-97, CofC "A" 42), **Olive Allnutt née Rose** (1879-1944, Meth "E" 254) and **Albert** (1882-1964, Meth "16" 7). Their cousins—the children of James Moss Rose (1828-1910)—**William** (1867-1916, Meth "E" 215) and **George** (1864-1943, CofC "A" 88) are also buried in the Pioneer Cemetery.

Rose Bros.

Thomas Rose (1824-97) did well as a market gardener and left an estate valued at £2,770 on his death but his



above:

Grave of Thomas and Susanah Rose—
Pioneer Cemetery, CofC "A" 41-42

sons **William (Dub)** (carpenter), **Raymond** (plumber) and **Moss** (carpenter) preferred the trades. As skilled carpenters, Dub and Moss made coffins and acted as undertakers as early as Dec 1881 (**Baby Penny**, CofC "A" 73)

when Moss was in his early 20s. The established local undertaker at the time was Thomas Lay (1866-87). The Rose brothers saw an opportunity and founded "Rose Bros" in May 1894 with an advertisement desiring "to announce that they have commenced business as *Furnishing Undertakers*". Indeed there are no evidence, in spite of stories published, that Rose Bros operated before this date. It was Moss who operated the Church Street branch (1894-98) but left the district after the death of his wife

Elizabeth Rose née Fryer (c1858-96, CofC "A" 70) and by 1899 he was living with his second wife **Susannah née Smith** (c1857-1944) at 4 Leith Street, Ballarat.

In the Minutes of Trustee meetings of the Cheltenham Cemetery, the earliest mention of "Rose Bros" was in Aug 1913 when they did trellis work and later in Mar 1914 for laying water pipes and a new door; earlier references include **William (Dub) Rose** for erecting two closets (toilets) and repairs to the office (Jul 1900) while a "Mr Rose" (probably Moss) was awarded a tender for the erection of a picket fence at 19/6 per rood (Oct 1883).

Raymond Rose (1865-1915) was also involved in the company. He died in Oct 1915 and two months later, the firm moved from Charman Road to Glebe Avenue (1915-1927) where **William (Dub)** resided suggesting that Dub may have had to sell in order to settle **Raymond's** share of the company with his estate; his two sons **Alexander** (c1895-1947, Meth "33" 26) and **Percy** (b circa 1897) were the only Rose sons to enlist for active overseas service during WWI. In 1927, the firm returned to Charman Road at number 241 (1927-53) and later number 255 before moving to the corner of Glebe and Charman Road where it still operates to this day.



above:

Advertisement for "Rose Bros"
(Oakleigh Leader 5 May 1894 p5)



Monumental Masons

“Rose Bros” was more than a firm of undertakers. And they had to be. Undertaking was profitable but during the 1890s, there was an average of just 56 interments a year at the Pioneer Cemetery, or one every six days. So the firm were not just undertakers, but monumental masons and building contractors. In Jul 1894, they were awarded the tender to repair the Shire poundkeeper’s cottage; they built Proudman’s Buildings (chemist) at Cheltenham (1894-95); and also the Methodist Wesleyan Church on Charman Rd (1894).

What is not commonly known is the firm erected headstone monuments though not, it appears, in great numbers to rival those of the more established firms such as Chambers & Clutten, Huxley Parker, Adamant and Tope & Dear. The graves pictured above were all constructed by “Rose Bros”; the last known monument erected was on the grave of **Elsie Jones (bu 2 Jan 1923, CofE “4” 2)**. Only when burials at the Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery increased in the 1920s that “Rose Bros” became undertakers full-time.

W. D. Rose & Son

The first known burial undertaken by “Rose Bros” was **George Beazley (1822-94, CofE “E” 151)** on 29 Jun 1894. The likely date when the firm changed its name to “W. D. Rose & Son” was in Jul 1927 when William (Dub) Rose’s son **Walter (Wally) (1891-1963, Memorial Park Lawn “G” Row “A” 26)** joined the business. Later, Wally’s sons Arthur (1920-2000, Memorial Park Lawn “G” Row “A” 25) and Walter (Laurie) (1924-94, Memorial Park Lawn “G” Row “A” 27) continued the family’s association until it the business was sold in 1979. The surviving memorabilia of the company held by family descendants includes a number of books going back to 1898 that was used to record the details of the funeral and keep tabs on payments. The earliest entry is for the funeral of **Margaret McNamara (bu 21**



above:
Wally Rose leading the cortege of John Prince in June 1934.

(Photo courtesy Lynne Hunt)

Feb 1898, RC “C” 3)

“hearse coach B Coffin ad” at a cost of £9-10-0.

One of the most expensive funerals handled by the firm was for **Sir Mathew Davies, (1850-1912, Pres “60”**

16) the notorious land boomer of the 1880s and ‘90s who died in Nov 1912. At a cost of £55, “Rose Bros” provided a hearse, four coaches, four waggonettes, a floral car, polished Kauri coffin and block of six graves; it took Davies’ estate until Oct 1914 to settle the amount.



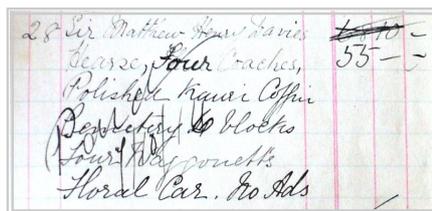
above:

Three generations of undertakers (L-R), William (Dub), Laurie and Wally Rose pictured in 1942

below:

Instructions for the funeral of Sir Mathew Davies in Nov 1912

(Photos courtesy Lynne Hunt)



In the News

“At about 1.30 p.m. on Tuesday [16 Feb 1932] a commotion was caused at Cheltenham when vigilance officer, Mr Claude Greenwood, and Mr. Henry Volk noticed after certain suspicious circumstances that the door of W. D. Rose & Son’s garage, situate on a block of land close to Cheltenham station, was open. Quickly approaching by the lane from Charman road, two men were noticed in the garage, one being captured by the other making his escape and was pursued by Mr Greenwood. The man, however, got temporary away, being captured on his return a little later. Of about six motor conveyances in the garage the motor hearse was selected and had been pushed to the entrance of the garage, apparently with the intention of using it for a joy ride. A young woman was accompanying the young men, although not actually being implicated in the attempted theft. It is understood they had been to a dance in the locality and having missed the last return train intended to have a ride home otherwise than by the Victorian Railways. The case was reported to the police.”

The Friends acknowledge the support of W. D. Rose Funerals Cheltenham. For more information, visit their website www.wdrose.com.au or ring (03) 9584 2222.