



AROUND THE GRAVES

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NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF CHELTENHAM AND REGIONAL CEMETERIES INC.

Dating the Pioneer Office

Dating the construction of the historic office/residence at the Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery, let alone the builder and cost has long eluded historians, and indeed the Friends. And while we are no closer to finding the answer, a recent search of the *Victorian Government Gazette* reveals some possible clues. It goes without saying that without mortality there is no money.



above:
The Cheltenham Pioneer
Cemetery Office (1999)

For many Cemetery Trusts, the first decades were year-to-year survival; Brighton and Springvale both struggled for at least four decades. And what of Cheltenham? Judging by the financial returns from *The Gazette*, Cheltenham went through a lean period until 1888 never attaining a balance higher than £53-

5-7½. Indeed, in 1880 the Trust was in debt. But after the 1880s, the financial position improved, albeit gradually before the 'golden era' of the late 1920s that financed, without any borrowing, the establishment of the Cheltenham Cemetery No. 2 (Cheltenham Memorial Park) during the Great Depression. In 1915-16 sums of £212-5-0 (Buildings) and £232-12-10 (Works) were spent suggesting that the Office may have been built during this period. And a search of the Victorian Heritage Register shows that houses with slate tile roofs were still being built during this time.

Did you know?

That the first person killed whilst skiing on the Victorian alps is buried in the Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery? It happened in September 1932 when Mary (Molly) Ann Hill, a 30-year-old member of the Ski Club of Victoria slipped on an ice patch at the edge of a steep bank near Mount Feathertop. Hill was with a group from the Club travelling to Mount Hotham when tragedy struck. They had just left The Bungalow hut on Mount Feathertop after eight days of

bad weather. Skiing in the 1930s was unlike today. More cross-country than downhill, one writer in 1926 was moved to observe that "*in all the extensive alpine district there are but three houses which offer permanent sleeping and feeding accommodation and the number of guests they can receive is very limited*". Molly Hill will be featured in our newest tour of the Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery on Sunday 21 June 2009 at 2:00pm titled "The Tragic '30s: Decade of Adventure". A great companion tour to our highly popular "The Tragic '20s". **Bookings essential.** On-line at www.focrc.org/tours.htm or ring 03 5420 7671. (Source: *The Argus* 25 Sep 1926 p8)

The Students

Football historians and the plethora of statisticians are not the greatest genealogists. Which is why one is hard pressed to find the final resting place of those who played our greatest game. (We know of one member who has been searching for the burial place of Laurie Nash, one of South Melbourne's renowned Foreign Legion). Which brings us to Edgar Albert Kneen (1882-1962), who in eight seasons of the VFL, captained Melbourne University Football Club (1908-12) and was a premiership player with Fitzroy (1904-06) in his first year with the Roy Boys. Born on 9 September 1882, Kneen made his debut at the age of 21. He went on to play 48 games with Fitzroy and kicked 33 goals, before transferring to The Students and added a further 46 games and 48 goals. His two majors in the 1904 Grand Final was equal best and the following year he represented Victoria. *The Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers* describes Kneen simply as "*a clever forward*". He died in April 1962 aged 79 and lies buried in the Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery. (Source: www.stats.rleague.com/afl/stats/players/E/Edgar_Kneen.html)



above:
Gravesite of Edgar
Kneen—Cheltenham
Pioneer Cemetery
(Pres "70" 22)

Lawrence Thomas Kyme: A Soldier of the Great War

(Story by Greg Kerlin)

Uncle Tom, as my mother fondly knew Lawrence Kyme, was until recently buried in an unadorned grave in the Cheltenham Memorial Park. He died in 1956 and is buried along with his wife Ethel in a grave that just did not seem fitting of a man who endured four years of war and trauma. The Department of Veterans' Affairs has recently approved a war grave memorial to be provided at the site based on a request from family and consideration of his WW1 war service. His military record tells a story of the endurance and drama in the life of this soldier.

Laurence was a descendant of early pioneer immigrants to Port Phillip (1840), and was a second generation born Victorian (1885). Before Laurence joined up he had been on the 1913-14 Antarctic rescue mission to pick up the explorer Douglas Mawson, an enterprise that saw him serve as crew member, cook and even entertainer (Harmonica). He enlisted in August 1914 and survived the four years duration from Gallipoli to Villers Bretonneux. Some might say he was the quintessential Australian private in that disciplinary action taken against him reflects quite a character and does make for interesting reading. He was sent back from France to England and incarcerated for 28 days in Wandsworth Military Prison for an offence cited as; *"While acting as an escort, taking a prisoner to the canteen"*. I'm not sure if the prisoner was German or Australian but certain they must have been hungry and grateful, and just for good measure Laurence was also charged for the 30 minutes' time he spent. There are many other entries including reference to the soldier's dilemma of sickness and hospitalisations for such as dysentery and diarrhoea and to the offence of "insulting language" towards an NCO while he was at Gallipoli. This looks like it cost him his job as GHQ cook and a demotion back to private. I'm not sure what the reference and charge of "Irregular Behavior" at Villers Bretonneux meant, though at 10pm at night one can only imagine. Laurence was all of 5 feet, 4½ inches tall (164cm), short in stature large at heart though not quite fitting the myth of an Anzac soldier. The records on original Army documents, including field documents, make for fascinating reading as you trace the journey of this Australian soldier.

Being one of the original "1914 men" he was picked for

"special leave" and repatriated home from France in the month before the Armistice came into place. This was on the insistence of the then PM Billy Hughes at a time of much political intrigue both at home and abroad as pressure was being applied to remove the greatly depleted original AIF members from the Front. History is testament to the four years of disproportionate and heroic sacrifices these men had made as only approximately 6,000 of the "originals" still survived at that point in time.



above:
Unadorned gravesite of
Lawrence Kyme—
Cheltenham Memorial
Park (RC "259" 4)

On return from this adventure he promptly enlisted in the AIF and after repatriation lived most of his life at Black Rock, Melbourne, where he resided with his wife Edith whom he married in 1921. They had two sons, neither of who had issue, and both now are deceased. One of these sons, Lawrence, served and fought at Milne Bay in New Guinea during World War 2. The house they lived in was quite small and has long since been demolished but being on Beach Road it was, as now, subject to rising property values and ever increasing council rates which caused him to eventually move further back to another location in Black Rock. He once told my mother that the beach and cliffs at Black Rock reminded him of Gallipoli, especially when it rained. We believe he was quite traumatised by his war time experience yet never received a pension (as was the case with so many other returned soldiers of this period) even though he had complained of lung damage after being gassed in France. His claim was apparently knocked back due to the time he had spent as a baker which the cash strapped authorities of the period claimed contributed to his breathing ailment. Laurence never marched in an Anzac day parade and until recently only the records at the archives and the memory in the hearts and minds of those who knew of him were testament to his story. Now at least his grave will be adorned as a soldier of that terrible war.

The Friends have written to the Kerlin family offering to assist with organising a service to unveil the war grave memorial to Lawrence Kyme.