

Box Hill Mausoleum

Box Hill Public Cemetery advances with the development of a mausoleum, 130 years after the Cemetery Gates first opened.

The Mausoleum housing 130 crypts opened in August of 2002, and was designed to compliment the existing building near where it was constructed. The office building is a Californian Bungalow style, and a nearby archway – built to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the cemetery – was made with substantial boxed-in timber beams, terracotta tiling and a stucco exterior with decorative arches of bricks.

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In less than 5 months since opening almost 100 of the 130 crypts have been sold, predominantly to the local Italian community. In response to the demand, the Trust are putting plans in place to construct a second stage mausoleum to incorporate a further 480 crypts.

Trustee Susan Johns, shares with us the heritage of the significantly historic Box Hill Cemetery, leading up to the successful opening of a community mausoleum that has been fully embraced by the local community.

BY SUSAN JOHNS

Settlement in Box Hill in Victoria's south east, began around 1837 but it was not until 1873 that Box Hill had its own cemetery.

There had been burials until then around the old United Methodist Church in Sim's Road (now Station Street), and in the Lutheran Churchyard in Doncaster. Public cemeteries had also been established in nearby Kew and Burwood.

The original twelve acres, part of the large reserve bounded by White Horse Road and Britnell's Road from which the Sagoe School and the police



The recently opened community mausoleum has been designed and constructed to reflect the existing surroundings



An aerial view of the imposing 30 acres of Box Hill Cemetery

paddock had already been alienated, was gazetted in 1873. An addition known as the 'New Survey' was gazetted in 1886 after the railway line was extended to Lilydale and in 1935 a further addition was gazetted bringing the cemetery to its present size of 30.8 acres.

The first burial took place the day after it was gazetted on 30 August 1873 of Jessie Lavinia Smith, a three week old child.

Plantings, layout and some memorials are distinct in the district in the different parts and reflect the initial

nineteenth century layout followed by the 1935 expansion.

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The eight Trustees nominated to govern the cemetery were representatives of the major religions of the time. The cemetery was divided into areas representing these religions



The Sidney Myer family memorial houses four family vaults

together with an area for other denominations.

The National Trust (Victoria) has recognised the cemetery as being of State Significance because of its importance in the course of Australia's cultural history as a mid-Victorian cemetery with an overlay of development from the 1920s and 1930s.

Most suburban cemeteries do not demonstrate the characteristic design of their periods of growth as twentieth century overcrowding and neglect have generally resulted in the loss of earlier schemes.

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The Columbarium was designed as a focal point for the cemetery. The first cremation in Australia took place in 1905. This columbarium was built in 1929 to resemble a Greek Cross with a Spanish tiled gable roof



Some of the team responsible for launching the highly successful Box Hill Cemetery Community mausoleum, left to right: William Orange (Trustee) Rajah Selliah (Milne Project Manager from Toronto), Eric Collyer (Chairman), Debra Doolan (Manager/Secretary) Malcolm Tucker (Consultant), John Hobba (Trustee), Vicki Goodall (Trustee)



The archway built in the 1920's to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the cemetery

and an octagonal tower with a central bronzed dome. Although the materials and exterior colours suggest a Mediterranean feel, the proportions of the domed interior are Byzantine.

The interior incorporated Byzantine richly-painted surfaces, which have been painted over but are just visible. There are caskets in concrete chambers below floor level, shelves within wall arcading displaying urns, and plaques.

Box Hill Cemetery is home to a range of significant people: Sir William Angliss, businessman; Edouard Borovansky,

Australian Ballet; Cyril Callister, inventor of vegemite; C J Dennis, poet; Joy Hester, artist; Frank Hyett, unionist; Sidney Myer, businessman; H C Sleight, merchant; Sir George Tallis, managing director of J C Williamson.

The local historical society has organised to mark some of the graves with help from public donation and grants. In April 2003 they expect to mark the grave of James Alfred Turner, an artist. 🗿

