

# Grantville's Historic Cemetery

## Background

The first recorded burial in what later became the colony of Victoria, was Private George Tingey of the 57th Regiment, a soldier assigned to the short-lived (1826-1828) settlement in Western Port Bay at present-day Corinella. The location of Tingey's burial went unrecorded and it is possible, if it was near the beach, that erosion has long claimed the site.

When settlement of the area began again in earnest it was in the form of squatters occupying areas of land known as 'runs' which were primarily used for grazing for which they paid a small rental fee. In the 1860s these leasehold were phased out in favour of smaller lots taken up by selectors. As the population grew townships formed and with them came the recognition of the need for land to be set aside for burials.

Corinella got in first, a listing in the Government Gazette giving notice that on 31 May 1872 a piece of land was set aside for cemetery purposes. As is often the case, the earliest burials are the least well recorded, especially those before 1877, if indeed any burial took place before then. The oldest marked grave is that of Rosetta Chin who died in 1877.



Room with a view. Parts of the cemetery look out over Western Port Bay, offering views of French Island, Temby Point and Corinella.

What is true of Corinella is especially true of the much larger Grantville cemetery. However, as the current site was used almost from the beginning of the township, the first known (if unofficial) internment took place on the 29th March 1872 when George Edwards, aged 1 year, a drowning victim, was laid to rest. This burial took place over two years before the site was officially listed as a cemetery in 1874.

The Grantville cemetery consists of four main sections, depending on the date and type of internment. Those of a certain age or with a working knowledge of Australian history, will know of the antipathy existing between Catholics and Protestants for all of the 19th and much of the 20th century up until the 1970s. The 'Catholic' area of this period is found near the entrance from the Bass Highway, on the right, Section 1-3. The Watsons and Garrys are the most prominent families buried there.

The central area (Niche North and South) is the prime area for ashes, though some are placed with family members in graves elsewhere. Unless you or your family has purchased a grave in another section, modern burials are found in Section L1-7.

The 'original' cemetery, the oldest and grandest section, is clearly visible from the Bass Highway and is on the left of the entrance gates. Most of the burials date to the early to mid-20th century as the first and second generation of settlers died off. This is also where the more impressive monumental masonry is found. Some of the oldest marked burials are: Hannorah Monks (1877); Mary Ann and William Brett (1882 & 1883); John Dickens (1883); Henry Biggar and William Peters (both 1885), Jean Leys and James Flintoff (both 1886).

In all, there are around 1000 graves/repositories occupied (in one form or another) by over 1,300 former denizens of an area stretching from The Gurdies to Glen Alvie and Loch to Bass and Corinella.

Due to a fire in the shed containing the original records, changes to the numbering of the graves for which inadequate records were kept, the loss of records through other means, and just the wastage that comes with time, there is some confusion as to the 'who' and 'where' of many of the unmarked graves. The files on this site are the best and most up-to-date as at 30th June 2018, and will be continuously updated as new information comes to our notice.



## Notable Graves / Notable Families / Notable Individuals

### Balderstone

When 20 year-old John Balderston left Kirkcaldy, Scotland for Australia in 1851, it was for employment as a station hand. News of the gold rush in Victoria saw a change of plans and he ended up on the gold-fields at Ballarat. Here he set up the first bakery – the place since known as Bakery Hill – where he remained for 44 years before heading to Gippsland. He settled in Glen Alvie in 1895 with his wife, Eliza, and nine children and grandchildren. The oldest Balderstone child was 40 year old John, and Barbara was the youngest at 19. Seven-year-old Robert Junior, a grandson, was to remain in the district for the next 74 years.



The prominent Balderstone plot at the cemetery. The last resting place of John, Eliza, John Jnr. and Thomas. [Section 13-10/11]

### Bonney

In 1891 the Tasmanian-born George and Mary Ann Bonney and their three children David, Osborne and Alice settled at The Gurdies after a stint farming on the Yallock River, clearing their selected land and initially building a four-room wattle and daub house (which was much altered and extended) Flooding was a problem until George reputedly hand dug a drainage ditch to Western Port Bay which later become known as Gurdies Creek.

Seven further children were born, starting in 1884 with May, followed by Grace, Beatrice, Hobart, Sydney, Florence and, in 1901, Glen. Until 1910 the nearest school was three miles away at Grantville, after which time a primary school at St. Hellier was built. Bonney Street in the Deep Creek section of Grantville is named after them.



The rather plain 'slab' grave of the senior Bonneys. [Section 30-15]

### Peters

William Peters arrived in Australia in 1850 at the age of 42, married the 20 year-old Ann Hanlon and settled first in Hastings on the Mornington Peninsula before moving to Grantville. In 1865 he purchased Minosa Park in Corinella. He and Ann produced ten children one of whom, James, is credited as the discoverer of the possum now known as the Lead-beater Possum.

Richard, another son, purchased the Corinella property after the death of their parents (William 1885 and Ann 1908). He died before he could move his family there from Abbotsford (an inner suburb of Melbourne); however, his widow, Victoria (nee Kilpatrick) completed the move with their two daughters Ellen and Laura in 1914.

Ellen Victoria Peters, better known as Nell, became a major figure at Corinella from the 1940s onwards; however, as she is interned at the Corinella cemetery (centre niche in the cremation section), her story rightly belong on the [www.bassvalleyhistorical.society.com.au](http://www.bassvalleyhistorical.society.com.au) website.



A grave with a view. Erected by Ellen Peters, brother of Richard and daughter of William and Ann. [Section 27-6/7]

### Nellie Melba

Dame Nellie Melba was a famous Australian opera singer, renowned for the number of her 'farewell' performances and an ice cream/peach/liqueur treat named after her (Peach Melba). The actual opera singer died in 1931 and is buried elsewhere. This Nellie Melba was clearly named after her. Thus, though the Grantville cemetery has *a* Nellie Melba, it, sadly, isn't *the* Nellie Melba. [Section L3-23]



## Craig

William and Martha Craig arrived in Australia from Ireland in 1876, eventually (after some legal problems) settling at Almurta in 1883 on the site of the former Braziers sawmill. It was actually Martha who arrived first (William was driving a mob of sheep to Brisbane) and for nine months lived in swampy conditions on their uncleared land with six children under six years of age with few other selectors nearby.

The early pioneers were a hardy lot!

Eventually the reunited Craigs built a large weatherboard house with a shingle roof and Baltic pine floors. It was eventually expanded, with five of the rooms having fire places (there being no central heating in those days). A separate cool store (no refrigeration either) and a well came next, and in the 1920s, two brick rooms.

The enterprising Craigs continued to expand and improved their holdings, income initially coming from the breeding of horses before building up a herd of dairy cows. In 1905, they installed a steam-driven milking machine.

After Martha's death in 1916, William married Margaret Paul and, leaving his properties to his sons, the couple relocated to Melbourne. His heirs, through industry and intermarriage with the nearby Calwell family, prospered. By 1945, Craig properties totalled 1,200 acres. Craig/Caldwell descendants are still there today.



Not the grandest, but among the most extensive [Section 17-1/2/3]

## McLaren

After arriving from Balquidder, Scotland, in the January 1854, the McLaren family, including their 15 year old son, John, initially settled at Clayton as market gardeners. In 1876, John married Margaret Mackie, and when the opportunity to select land in south-west Gippsland arose in 1884, John and his then nine-year-old son, William John, walked, first to Childers, when he chose a block of land, then on to the Glen Alvie district area where he selected land for a grazing lease (later converted to an agricultural license).

The lease settled and an initial cabin built, the rest of the family arrive (via Grantville) at the property, now named, unsurprisingly, Balquidder. After trying dairying and butter production, the McLarens turned to cheesemaking. Initially, the end result was carried by pack horse to Granville for shipping to Melbourne, then later by railway.

William John was the oldest son, Mary being the eldest children, then came Dorothy, Peter, Christina and David. Visitors to cemeteries like to examine, not only the oldest or grandest graves, but those of the most famous. Although almost forgotten today, one of the McLarens achieved world-fame.

All of the McLaren boys were good axemen from their teens. William John was for a time a member of a troupe who styled themselves as the Collie King Axemen, travelling about taking part in competitions and giving displays.

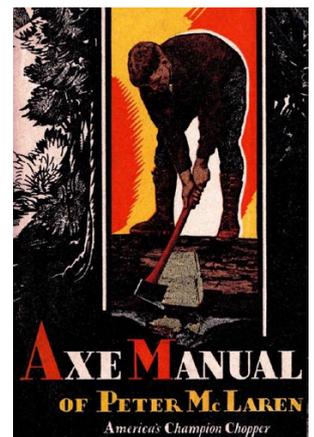
But it was Peter who stood out, becoming a world-renowned axeman and expert. Competing from the age of 16, Peter won his first championships in 1906 in Victoria, following it up the same year with another in November in Western Australia. Eventually he ended up competing in the United States (including a stint with the Barnum & Bailey circus) where he became known as America's Champion Axeman.

From a February 1929 Plumb axe advertisement in *Boys' Life*: "Peter McLaren is a world-renowned axe expert. In 200 chopping contests, all over the country, during the past year, only four men have succeeded in cutting a log in DOUBLE his time. No man has approached his chopping time from an even start."

He also authored an instructional manual (picture of the cover below), and in 1988, a book was written about him: *The Sky Between The Trees*.

Peter McLaren returned to Australia in 1950 and lived with his sister Dorothy (Dolly) and her husband, Albert, at Wonthaggi. He died in November 1952 and today is almost entirely forgotten.

His rather plain grave is at Section 12-13. That of William John at 12-29.



## Dunbabin

The Dunbabin family (sometime misspelt as Dunbabbin) arrived as second-wave selectors in the 1890s, settling near St. Helier. Except on three points, the Dunbabins were not untypical of others around them. They arrived, farmed for a few decades then sold up and left, with no direct descendants remaining in the area. They do not appear to have been active in local affairs; there is no mention of them participating in agricultural fairs, church, schooling and sporting matters or local politics.

The three points that mark them out as untypical: John and Amelia produced ten children, in itself not a remarkable feat, large families being common. What is unusual is that all ten children, in an era of poor hygiene, rampant disease and insufficient medical knowledge, survived infancy. The first of the ten Dunbabin siblings to die, Sydney, did so at the age of 18 and not of disease but in a shooting accident.

The second distinction is that, for such an ephemeral family, they did manage to get a street named after them a road running down to the eastern picnic area and entrance to the Gurdies Nature Reserve, though this may have more to do with the third and major difference between the Dunbabins and other settlers.

Though the Dunbabin family was neither the most prosperous or prominent, for a short time they became the most famous in south-west Gippsland with the 1915 murder of Elizabeth Dunbabin.

On the morning of Tuesday 24 August 1915, the body of Elizabeth was discovered in a field near Woodleigh Station. She had arrived at the station by train the previous evening with the intention of walking home to St. Helier, a distance of around 5 miles (8km), not considered a huge distance in those days of few cars and bad roads.

As reported on page 3 of the *Gippsland Mercury* on 31 August 1915: *As the result of the post-mortem examination this morning by Dr. Mollison on the body of Elizabeth Dunbabin, who was found dead in a ditch in a paddock near Woodleigh railway station on Tuesday morning, there is no doubt deceased was strangled in the most cold-blooded manner. It is now believed that she had a long and desperate struggle with her assailant, and the murderer afterwards threw her body into the ditch with the idea of creating the impression that death had been caused by drowning.*

Detective-sergeant Burvett and constable Orgill, investigating the case, having eliminated a passing swagman as a suspect, were on their way to arrest railway labourer, Peter Allan, when news arrived of his suicide.

Again, from the *Gippsland Mercury*: *Today a search of Allan's tent resulted in the discovery of a dark suit of Allan's clothes, which were mud and blood stained. The suit was that which he wore on Monday night when he went by train to Nyora, returning to Woodleigh the same evening by a later train, by which Miss Dunbabin, the murdered woman, also travelled. Allan's brother, from South Dudley, today identified the suit of clothes, also a pair of American ball-toe boots found in his tent, as those of the dead man. The sleeves of the coat were covered with mud up to the elbows indicating that deceased had been on the ground and the trousers had blood stains on the front.*

And finally: *Dr. Mollison this evening held a post mortem examination on the body of Allan and found that death was consistent with strychnine poisoning. Miss Dunbabin's body was buried at Grantville to-day. Her aged mother was grief-stricken. The date of the inquests has not been fixed.*

The aged mother mentioned was Amelia, who died at Bass in 1934 at the age of 99. Elizabeth's sister, Annie, remained in St. Helier with her husband, dying there in 1955, aged 90. Her brother William also died at St. Helier, also at the age of 90, in 1970, the last known survivor of the ten children of John and Amelia. Both are buried with Elizabeth and their parents at Grantville.



Suffering the neglect of years, the five Dunbabin graves. That of the senior Dunbabins, John and Amelia (top left) at least has a headstone, and despite the passage of decades, one still easily readable. Their son Charles (died 1940) and his sister, the murdered Elizabeth, occupy the middle plot, and William, the one next to that. Both plaques are barely legible [Section 17-15/14/13]. Set aside, in their own section, are the burials of Louisa Dunbabin (died 1957 at Parkville) and Annie Gosch. [Section 18-1 & 2].

## Thomson

In 1883 William Thomson was dispatched to Gippsland by his father to inspect the area with an eye to selecting a suitable plot of land on which to settle. A suitable property selected, a licence approved, William made the first rent payment in December 1883. By 1885, William had cleared the land and built a home. His parents then sold up at St. Arnauld and joined him on the property.

On 11 June 1886, William married Annie Verran, the daughter of a miner from Cornwall. The marriage produced nine children. William and Annie were active in local affairs, helping to establish the first primary school and raising funds for the building of a church. A keen shooter, William was also a member of two rifle clubs (the Bass Valley Club and later the Glen Alvie Club) and he also showed a flair for stock breeding, establishing a Border Leicester sheep stud and displaying the result at the Grantville Agricultural Show and other shows in the area.

Annie died in 1914 and William in 1936. They are buried with their daughter, Loveday, died 1959 [Section 14-12]. Note: the Johan (pronounced Jo-Ann) Thomson located at 24-34 is not the daughter of William and Annie, though likely a relative after whom the younger Johan was named.



## Eden

In 1873, George Eden and his son, Bill, left their family behind and travelled to Milford (the future Glen Forbes) where Bill worked as an assistant cook and as a driver delivering timber to the mill formerly owned by Alexander Stewart and now under new management.

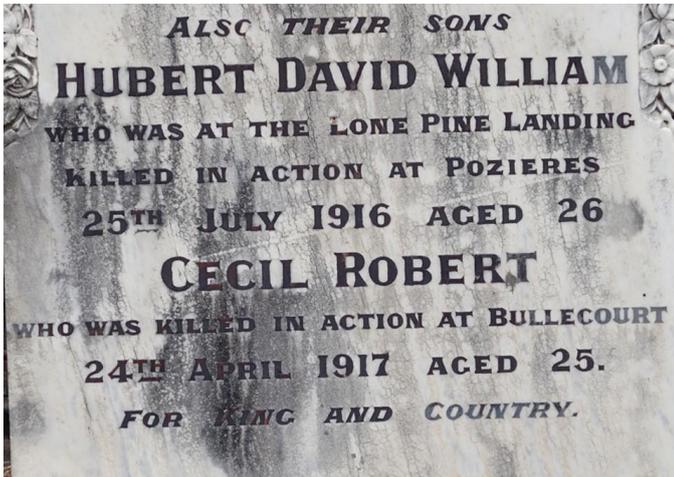
Eventually, with enough money raised, the rest of the family joined them at Milford. More land was selected and leased until 1907 when the land (thought to be around 1000 acres) became Eden property outright.

Bill and his older brother, Robert James, married, respectively, Jane Painter and Catherine Stewart. As their families grew, this led to a division of the land some of which was later sold. Despite this, Eden descendants continue to live in the area today.



The Edens were an extensive family and have more burials than most others. Unfortunately, most are without any monumental masonry or even plaques. Those that aren't are also not very impressive; however, Elizabeth Jane Eden (died 1900) in Section 13-4 is at least one of the older burials.

## They Who Didn't Return

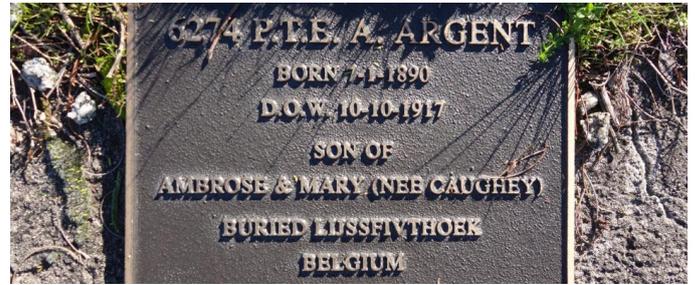


Hubert David William Thompson  
 Service number: 2503  
 Rank: Private  
 Unit: 8th Australian Infantry Battalion  
 Service: Australian Imperial Force  
 Conflict: First World War, 1914-1918  
 Date of Death: 25 July 1916  
 Place of Death: France  
 Cause of Death: Killed in action (Poziers, France)  
 Age at Death: 26  
 Cemetery: Gordon Dump Cemetery, Ovillers la Boisselle, Picardie, France

Cecil Robert Thompson  
 Service number: 2421  
 Rank: Private  
 Unit: 37th Australian Infantry Battalion  
 Service: Australian Imperial Force  
 Conflict: First World War, 1914-1918  
 Date of Death: 23 April 1917  
 Place of Death: France  
 Cause of Death: Killed in action (Bullecourt, France)  
 Age at Death: 25  
 Cemetery: Cite Bonjean Military Cemetery, Armentieres, Lille, Nord Pas de Calais, France



Clifton Ward Emery  
 Service number: 1501  
 Rank: Trooper  
 Unit: 8th Australian Light Horse Regiment  
 Service: Australian Imperial Force  
 Conflict: First World War, 1914-1918  
 Date of Death: 03 May 1918  
 Cause of Death: Killed in action (El Sault, Palestine)  
 Age at Death: 31  
 Cemetery: Damascus Commonwealth War Cemetery, Damascus, Syria



Alfred Argent  
 Service number: 6274  
 Rank: Private  
 Unit: 21st Australian Infantry Battalion  
 Service: Australian Imperial Force  
 Conflict: First World War, 1914-1918  
 Date of Death: 10 October 1917  
 Place of Death: Belgium  
 Cause of Death: Died of wounds  
 Age at Death: 27  
 Cemetery: Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Lijssenthoek, Flanders, Belgium



David Hugh Caldwell  
 Service number: VX21622  
 Rank: Private  
 Unit: 2/24th Australian Infantry Battalion  
 Service: Australian Army  
 Conflict: Second World War, 1939-1945  
 Date of Death: 02 May 1945  
 Place of Death: Tarakan, Borneo  
 Cause of Death: Killed in action  
 Cemetery: Labuan War Cemetery, Labuan, Malaysia

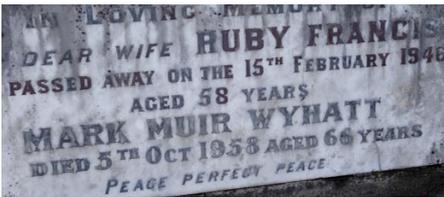


Gilbert McLaren  
 Service number: VX106005  
 Rank: Sergeant  
 Unit: 29/46th Australian Infantry Battalion  
 Service: Australian Army  
 Conflict: Second World War, 1939-1945  
 Date of Death: 7 December 1943  
 Place of Death: New Guinea  
 Cause of Death: Killed in action  
 Cemetery: Unknown

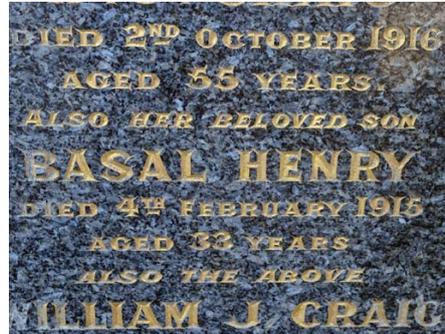
## Monumental Mistakes



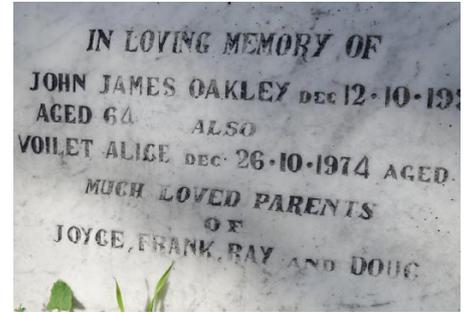
Gender-bending is not a new development unless, that is, Francis Annie was a Catholic nun taking her name from Francis of Assisi. So hat's off to Francis Annie, a cross-gender pioneer ahead of her time. Or it is an inscription error, the carver not realising that it is Francis (masculine) and Frances (feminine).



Two for the price of one! Another Francis/Frances gender-bender. Well done Ruby Francis. It probably came as a shock to the Wyhatt family that not only did they have a Francis Ruby, but someone surnamed Wyhatt found his way into the family grave.



While it is possible to argue that this is a Celtic or other variation of Basil; both his Birth and Death certificates list him as Basil. So almost certainly an inscription error, though one more plausibly explained away than others.



Roses are red and violets are... Wait! What? What's a violet? And whatever it is, is it violet? Of course, this could be a little known variant of the name of the colour and flower that lent itself to the women's name. That, presumably, is what the Oakley's told everybody.

## What's in a name?

The names alone of the more than 1,300 internments in the cemetery from 1872 to the present day can provide a wealth of information. They can also throw up one or two interesting quirks. Given that most internments date from the early 20th century to the 1970s, the names reflect a very Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Celtic origin with an occasional Angelo, Elfriede, Henrikus, Lambertus, Ulrich and Wera in the record. As to be expected, there are no Abduls, Indiras, Lakshmis, Dilkis, or Chens, and nor are there any sub-Saharan African names.

If you were male and born before the 1950s, you stood a 1-in-3 chance of being named either William, Johnathan (or John), James or Robert. Female names offered slightly more potential variation, not only with individual names but versions within each name, as per the variants of Maria, Isabella and Anne (not including Annabella, Annabelle and Annette).

Surprisingly, given the era and origin of most settlers in Victoria, there are few quintessential Victorian names: Ambrose, Bernice, Cedric, Cornelia and Jeanette (one instance of each); Archibald, Beryl, Cyril, Gilbert, Gwendoline, Harriet, and Wilfred (two instances), Beatrice, Blanche, Cecil, Constance, Hubert, Maurice and Winifred (three instances) and Edwin (four uses). Even more oddly, there is only one Victoria, appearing only as a second name (Louisa Victoria Kennedy) and, depressingly, not a single instance of Marmaduke, a name that is surely overdue for a revival.

Either it was never as popular a name as imagined, or pre-1980s parents possessed a high degree of foresight as to how the meaning of words can change over time, but there isn't a single Gay in the cemetery.

As for unusual names, try: Berkley, Briscombe, Clavel, Culmer, Davidene, Delwyn, Howatson, Janedith, Loveday, Maida, Morva, Myrus, Panton, Purves, Rigby, Scholey and Soutal. Before laughing too hard, imagine how some early 21st century names will appear to those in 2118. How will they react to YOUR name?

William	x 91	Mary	x 46
John/		Ann /Anne /	
Jonathan	x 70	Anna /Annie	x 38
James	x 57	Elizabeth	x 35
Robert	x 43	Margaret	x 30
George	x 38	May	x 30
Thomas	x 37	Alice	x 23
Charles	x 30	Jane	x 23
Henry	x 26	Florence	x 19
Edward	x 24	Isabella / Isobel /	
Alexander	x 23	Isabel / Isabelle /	
David	x 18	Ishbel	x 15
Ronald	x 17	Sarah/Sara	x 15
Albert	x 16	Lillian /Lilly	x 13
Peter	x 16	Maria /Marie /	
Harold/		Maree	x 13
Harry	x 15	Dorothy	x 11
Alfred	x 14	Frances	x 11
Joseph	x 14	Emily	x 10
Frederick /		Lorna	x 10
Fredrick	x 12	Eliza	x 9
Francis	x 12	Ellen	x 9
Leslie	x 12	Grace	x 9
Ernest	x 11	Mabel	x 9
Gordon	x 10	Amelia	x 8
Richard	x 10	Elsie	x 8
		Doris	x 8

# Grave Views

