

# SAILORS, SOLDIERS AND CIVIL SERVANTS

## A Tour of St. Thomas' Rest Park



### INTRODUCTION

St. Thomas' Cemetery was the first burial ground established on the north side of the harbour. Although now converted into a Rest Park, elements of the original mid-nineteenth century cemetery remain. The elaborate stone and iron gates and fence were designed by the church wardens from pattern books in 1883.

The land for the cemetery was donated to the Anglican Parish of St. Leonards in 1845 by a prominent landowner and merchant, Alexander Berry. Berry erected the Pyramid-shaped family vault to house the remains of his wife, Elizabeth, and his brother-in-law, Edward Wollstonecraft; and was later interred there himself.

In 1967 the cemetery was handed over to North Sydney Municipal Council and proclaimed a Rest Park. Several historic precincts were created to relocate headstones, the remainder of the site was landscaped for recreational use and planted with native trees.

The Rest Park was officially opened in 1974 and the restored Sexton's Cottage in 1983.

The cemetery contains approximately 4000 graves, though only a small portion of the burials are marked by headstones nowadays. Sadly the headstones of many of the interred are missing. Many have been lost over the years through vandalism or irreparable damage caused by excessive weathering, namely many of the naval personnel including Robert Deane, R.N., who designed "Johnny's" Naval House, Grosvenor Street; Rear Admiral Willoughby Pudsey-Dawson; and Captain Leopold Von Reicherbach, Captain in the Imperial Germany Navy, HMS Olga.

Buried alongside the naval personnel, there are the graves of military personnel and government officials. This latter group of men, settled with their families on the North Shore, in the mid-nineteenth century when the township of St. Leonards (the boroughs of St. Leonards, East St. Leonards and Victoria amalgamated in 1890 to form the borough of North Sydney) was a much desired residential location, away from the noxious and populated areas to the south. Again, and unfortunately, there are many missing monuments amongst these groups which include Sir George R. Dibbs, Premier of NSW, 1889, 1890-1894; William Christopher Bennett, Commissioner for Roads and Bridges; William Harrington Palmer, Official Assignee; and Alfred McFarland, District Court Judge.

There are too many names to mention here, but on this tour we shall be looking at the monuments of some of the naval and military personnel, and civil servants and administrators of the colony buried at St. Thomas' Cemetery, now St. Thomas' Rest Park.

#### 1. **HARRIOTT, William Rupert** (Lieutenant)

E04

Born in 1876 in Armidale, he moved with his family to North Sydney where he lived for 20 years. He enlisted in the Army Service Corps, becoming a lieutenant in E. Company of the Mounted Rifles. He travelled to Africa with the Australian Contingent in 1900, where he fell,

mortally wounded in the thigh on 12 June 1900 aged 23, at Diamond Hill. Ceremonial gates erected in his memory were opened at St. Thomas' Church in April 1901. Harriott Street in Waverton bears the family name.

**2. PIDDINGTON, Albert Bathurst** H42

Born 9 September 1862. Piddington was a leading figure in the labour movement in Australia. Called to the bar in 1890 he refused an appointment to the High Court in 1913 when it was criticised as a political appointment. He was a Royal Commissioner on the basic wage inquiry and was responsible for the introduction of child endowment. He died 6 June 1945 aged 83. The epitaph reads:

*His work will live on in the thoughts of those who loved him, and in the lives of countless others, who will know his name.*

*The comfort of having a friend may be taken away but not that of having one.*

**3. WHITTON, John** H45

Born 21 December 1819. Called by Sir Henry Parkes 'the father of NSW Railways'. While engineer-in-Chief from 1857-1889, John Whitton's railway system reached every corner of the State. His greatest feats were the Zig-Zags on the Blue Mountains line. He died 20 February 1898 aged 79. John Whitton lived in 'Montrose', McLaren Street (demolished about 1907).

**4. POCKLEY, Robert Francis (Captain)** K06

Born 10 March 1823 at Deptford, England. He attained his Master's certificate at age 18, and at age 19, in 1842, he sailed the ship "Tobago" to Sydney. In 1853, he built his home 'Pictonville' at North Sydney on the Pacific Highway near Berry Street. He became harbourmaster of Port Jackson in 1867. He was also a supporter of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron and a warden of St. Thomas' Church. He died 29 September 1892 aged 69.

**5. BATTYE, Edward Montague (Captain)** D13

Captain Battye was born in 1817 and became attached at an early age to the Royal Household as page to Queen Adelaide, wife of William IV. He arrived in Sydney in 1847 as Aide-de-Camp to his uncle, George Wynyard. In 1850 he was appointed to re-form the Mounted Military Police as Superintendent of the Western Patrol with 27 troops, and when gold was discovered was transferred to Bathurst to keep order on the goldfields. In the 1860s he cleared bushrangers from the Young area. In 1880 he was appointed superintendent at Albury to deal with the Kelly gang. He died 12 July 1898 aged 81 after retiring in 1893 after 42 years of police service. The epitaph reads:

*Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.*

**6. BENT, Ellis** K15

Appointed Deputy Judge Advocate in NSW in 1809. He arrived in the same vessel as Governor Macquarie. Bent was the first practising barrister-at-law to reach the colony. At first on good terms with Macquarie, he disagreed with Macquarie's policy that convict attorneys who had served their term and were of good character should be allowed to practice. This led to the termination of his post. Bent was buried in the George Street Burial Ground, Macquarie refusing to allow his burial on Garden Island of which he had been given a lease. Later he was reinterred

with his friend Ovens at Garden Island and finally at St. Thomas'. Bent Street in the city is named after him.

**7. OVENS, John**

K15

Came to Sydney as an ensign in the 73rd Regiment and by 1810 was Lieutenant and Engineer in charge of public works. He returned to England and fought under Brigadier-General Thomas Brisbane at Pampeluna, Orthes, and Vittoria during the Peninsula war (1813-1814). Ovens returned to Sydney as Aide-de-Camp to Governor Brisbane and acting engineer. In this position he supervised convict road gangs employed on public works. In 1823, Ovens explored the Upper Murrumbidgee and Monaro district and helped John Oxley survey Twofold Bay. He was promoted to Major and granted land at Concord.

By his request he was buried in the same grave as his friend Ellis Bent in the George Street Burial Ground (now Town Hall site). Later the bodies were reinterred at Garden Island and finally at St Thomas' Cemetery. Ovens name was given to a river in Victoria and a mountain near Bathurst.

**8. BOWER, James St. Clair (Lieutenant Commander)**

K15

Lieutenant Commander James St. Clair Bower, in command of the HMS Sandfly, was undertaking a survey cruise of the Solomon Islands. He and four of his seaman were attacked and killed by the natives of Florida on October 15, 1880 whilst surveying the Florida Coast in the Sandfly's whaleboat. A retaliatory expedition was despatched in April 1881 to catch the murderers of Lieutenant Bower and his boat's crew, and to execute them where the massacre took place. When they found Bower's body, it was naked, headless and divested of the right arm, and great pieces of flesh were stripped from the back. Reginald Tupper was a young sub-lieutenant who took part in this punitive raid, and years later gave the finale to this story. "There is one curious incident in the affair which is worth recounting. The second surgeon of the "Cormorant", ...when taking his walk, saw a small native girl with a necklace of human teeth, and he noticed at once that some of them had been stopped with gold. He bought the necklace for a stick of tobacco - surely a curious desire for a small girl - and as soon as he returned to the ship he found that not only that the teeth fitted the skull perfectly, but that Bower had that number of teeth stopped with gold, so there was no doubt that we had at least small part of the remains to be taken back to Sydney for burial".

**9. MORIARTY, Merion**

K5

Born in County Cork, Ireland, he joined the Royal Navy in 1807 serving at Copenhagen, the Mediterranean and West Indies.

In 1842 he was appointed Harbour Master in Sydney by the British Government and arrived in Sydney with his family in 1843. His duties included control of port, lighthouses and pilot vessels in the colony. His career was uneventful until in 1847, when piloting HMS Inflexible, he ran aground in Sydney Harbour. From 1860 he represented Braidwood in the Legislative Assembly. He died 10 January 1864 aged 70. This family monument was repaired and a new iron railing erected in 1990 at the instigation of members of his family.

**10. GOODENOUGH, James G. (Commodore)**

G82

Joined the Royal Navy aged 13 years and pursued a naval career in many parts of the world. In 1873 he was appointed Commodore of the Australian Station with HMS 'Pearl' as his flagship.

He played a key role in negotiations leading to the Deed of Cession being signed between the Chiefs of Fiji and British representatives.

In 1875 the 'Pearl' conveyed the newly-appointed Governor Sir Arthur Gordon to Fiji and then continued on to Santa Cruz in the New Hebrides. Here Goodenough and his men were attacked by natives and subsequently Goodenough and two crewmen, Edward Rayner and Frederick Smales, died from arrow wounds received in the attack. Their funeral service at St. Thomas' Church occasioned expressions of great public sympathy.

*Captain Goodenough's ceremony, in 1875 was a large public occasion. It was one of the most numerously attended funerals which have been witnessed for many years in the colony. All the public offices were closed at noon and business at many of the leading establishments in the city out of respect for the memory of the deceased officer. In accordance with the Commodore's own request arrangements were made to inter the bodies in the little cemetery at St. Leonards. Steamers commenced to ply across the water at an early hour and before long a dense concourse of people, numbering several thousands, had assembled on Milsons Point ... a small detachment of men from the artillery were left at West Point to fire minute guns after the bodies were landed. HMS "Pearl" lay in Farm Cove with crossed yards, and a little after 2pm the bodies of the two seamen were lowered into the steamer "Bungaree" and brought across under escort of a body of marines and sailors. The Commodore's body was brought across in his own gig, towed by a little steam launch and followed by the state barge of his Excellency the Governor, who was accompanied by Mrs Goodenough and the Commodore's two little boys. When the bodies were landed at Milsons's Point, they were placed on gun carriages, which were pulled up the hill by the seamen of the "Pearl".*

Anchors used on the iron railing around his headstone were Victorian symbols of hope as well as representing his occupation.

**11. HMS PEARL AND WATSON, Arthur (Captain of Tops) G83, G81**

Commercial exploitation of South Pacific Islanders last century, and particularly the 'recruitment' or kidnapping of natives for the Queensland Kanaka labour force, led to British Navy patrols of South Seas Island groups.

In 1873 HMS Pearl under Commodore Goodenough was sent on a cruise of peace and conciliation to the area. Goodenough and his men were attacked by natives at Santa Cruz, New Hebrides in 1875 and Goodenough, Edward Rayner and Frederick Smales (both 18) were killed by poisoned arrows. The 'Pearl' returned to Britain in 1876 at the end of her Commission. The headstone lists all the crew who perished during the three years in the Pacific.

**12. ROLLESTON, Christopher G69**

Born 27 July 1817 at Burton-Joyce, Nottinghamshire, England. He worked in a mercantile house before coming to Sydney in 1838. He purchased farmland near Paterson, but the farm was unsuccessful, and he sought a government post. He was appointed a Commissioner of Crown Land in the Darling Downs area in Queensland. He returned to England for a short time in 1853 and he declined the presidency of Montserrat, West Indies which was offered to him. He returned to Sydney with his new bride, and became private secretary to the Governor-General William Denison. He was appointed Registrar-General in 1855, joined the Philosophical Society of NSW in 1856, was involved in several Royal Commissions. As well as being a magistrate from 1842 he was appointed Auditor-General in 1864, retiring from this post in 1883. He died 9 April 1888 aged 70 at his Milsons Point home, 'Northcliffe', of chronic Bright's disease.

**13. OLIVER, Alexander**

G61

Born 30 September 1832 in Sydney. His career was interrupted when he lost his left arm in a shooting accident. He matriculated in 1852 as one of the first 24 students at the University of Sydney. He went to England at the age of 21, where he practised as a barrister. He returned to Sydney in 1864 with his wife (who died in June of that year), and was appointed examiner to the Council of Education. In 1865 he was appointed parliamentary draftsman, secretary to the Law Reform Commission 1870 - 1872, elective trustee of the Australian Museum 1873, examiner of titles under the Real Property Act from 1874, as well as the registrar of the Friendly Societies. He was reappointed sole parliamentary draftsman in 1878, registrar of trade unions from 1882, fellow of the Senate of the University of Sydney, and was president of the Land Appeal Court 1892 - 1904. He died on 2 June 1904 at his home, 'Shelcote', Neutral Bay. He had a library which was reputedly "one of the best in private hands", his taste including the classics, theology, history, political economy, science, philosophy, sea poetry, novels and works by contemporary Australian writers. Note the Latin epitaph, which translates as - *Alexander Oliver, a man learned in the law and devoted to belles lettres, a great lover of his country, who, having lived for seventy years, rests from his labours in the peace of the Lord.*

**14. HIXSON, Francis (Captain R.N.)**

G60

Born in 1833 at Swanage, Dorset, he joined the navy as a young man. Between 1848 - 1851 he served as master's assistant helping to survey the east coast of NSW, New Zealand and South Seas aboard the 'Havannah'. In 1852 he joined the 'Herald' to take possession of New Caledonia. Finding the French in occupation, they surveyed the Fijian Islands and came to Sydney. In 1858 he won the silver medal of the Royal Humane Society for the rescue of a drowning seaman who fell overboard in Shark Bay, Western Australia. In 1863 he became Superintendent of pilots, lighthouses and harbours in NSW. He was also President of the Marine Board and Officer commanding Naval Forces of NSW. In 1870 he lived at St. Leonards Cottage' now Don Bank Museum; 'Upton Grange' in Edward street (now SCEGS Shore Junior School) was built for him by his father-in-law, Francis Lord. He died 2nd March 1909 aged 76.

According to the Sydney Morning Herald 14 March 1909

*Full of years and of honour, and with all the imposing solemnity of a naval funeral, the late Captain Hixson, R.N., was laid to rest, yesterday afternoon in the burial ground of St. Thomas' Church, North Sydney. His grave is in the immediate vicinity of the late resting-place of Commodore Goodenough, an old friend and comrade, and of Lieutenant Gowlland, R.N., brother-in-law of the deceased.*

**15. GOWLLAND, John Thomas Ewing**

G48

Born 10 July 1838 at Leysdown, Kent. As a naval officer he saw active service at the Crimea. He later served in the survey of the Islands off Vancouver and became friendly with many Indian chiefs. Appointed to the Australian Survey in 1865, he compiled many charts of the coast of NSW and waters of the Richmond, Clarence, Hunter and Hawkesbury Rivers. While surveying Middle Harbour he was drowned when his boat overturned in the bombora off Dobroyd Point, 14 August 1874 aged 36 years. The monument was erected by his friends. According to the Sydney Morning Herald 15/8/1874

*"at about 1.16pm when off Dobroyd Point, which is the headland between Manly Beach and the entrance to Middle Harbour, the boat was capsized by a heavy "roller". Henry Peterson struck out immediately for the shore, but, when about*

*half way, sank ... Mr Gowlland, Gardiner, and a man named Charles Venus got hold of the boat ... Venus who was the captain of the boat, stripped his clothes off and advised Mr Gowlland to do the same, but he was unable to do so. The boat, in the meantime, was prevented from drifting to shore by the lead-line, which was being used when the boat upset, getting entangled with something on the bottom. Venus then said that he would swim ashore and told Mr Gowlland to keep by the boat until he sent assistance. It is presumed however, that Mr Gowlland got benumbed, and was unable to hold on any longer, as he was afterwards seen endeavouring to swim ashore, and then suddenly to sink”.*

**16. MANN, Gother Kerr**

G43

Born in 1810. He was the first Chief Commissioner for Railways in NSW, 1855 - 1857, Commander of the first Volunteer Artillery Corps, Engineer in charge of the construction of the Fitzroy Dry Dock on Cockatoo Island, and Superintendent of the convicts on the island. He lived at “Greenwich House” on Greenwich Point. Mann’s Point and Manns Avenue, Greenwich and Neutral Bay, are named after him and his famous family. He died 1 January 1891 aged 89.

**17. AMPHLETT, Edward Albert**

G30

Born 28 December 1829 in London. He was 14 years old when he joined the Royal Navy, serving on various ships until 1878. He served in the Baltic 1852 - 1854 and China 1854 -1859. He was Paymaster of the Naval Brigade at the capture of Canton and other operations in China, and was in New Zealand during the Maori War 1859 - 1861. In 1863 he was one of the survivors of the wreck of the Orpheus in Manuka Harbour whilst serving as the Paymaster. He retired in 1880 but took up the position of Paymaster of Imperial Pensions in NSW in 1891, aged 63. He died 31 January 1896 at his home ‘Clent’, McLaren Street, North Sydney, aged 67.

**18. STANLEY, Owen (Captain)**

G14

Born in England in 1811 he joined the Royal Navy aged 15 years. Until 1836 he served on a number of survey ships in South America, the Straits of Magellan, and in the Mediterranean. In June 1836 he joined an Arctic expedition and was in charge of astronomical and magnetic observations. In 1838 he was a member of the expedition to found a settlement at Port Essington in the Northern Territory.

In 1846 he was made Commander of the survey ship HMS ‘Rattlesnake’ and undertook hydrographic surveys of New Guinea waters. He died of a fever in his cabin in Sydney Harbour in the arms of the ship’s surgeon, Thomas Henry Huxley, later to achieve fame as a biologist. The Owen Stanley Ranges immortalises his name. Captain Owen Stanley, the explorer and navigator, who died aboard the HMS Rattlesnake in 1850, was buried at St Thomas’ with much fanfare. The Sydney Morning Herald, on 16th March, 1850, takes up the story:

*The coffin was placed in the Rattlesnake’s pinnace, which was taken in tow by the gig, pulled by the late captain’s crew and by another boat. These were escorted by two rows of boats from the naval vessels, from the police and customs and from the merchant ships and whalers... firing minute guns which continued until the coffin had landed ... At Blues Point it came under the escort guard of 200 men and the band of the 11th Regiment. The cortege then moved to the Church of St Thomas in North Sydney.*

Of the grave side scene:

*An immense concourse of people were assembled to witness these obsequies, and no token of respect that could be paid to the memory of the deceased was omitted ... The coffin was removed to a vault prepared for its reception. The funeral services were terminated by three volleys fired over the grave by the guard of honour... A feeling of deep sympathy has been manifested by all classes in our community.*

**19. BARNEY, George (Lieutenant Colonel)**

G66

Born in London in 1792. At age 16 he joined the army. He arrived in Sydney in 1835 and was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in 1840. He was Commander of the Royal Engineers and designer of Victoria Barracks as well as being Chief Commissioner of Crown Lands, Member of NSW Legislative Council; Lt. Governor of Northern Australia (site of Gladstone) and Surveyor-General responsible for the completion of Fort Denison, Circular Quay, Cockatoo Dock, Darlinghurst Gaol and Newcastle Breakwater. He lived in the 'Priory' still at 5 Priory Road, Waverton. He died 26 January 1862 aged 71.

**20. CARTER, William**

G06

William Carter emigrated in 1824 on the ship the Prince Regent to take up the position as Australia's first Master in Chancery of the Supreme Court of NSW. In 1843 he became the first Registrar-General of the Colony. His daughter Jane married the artist Conrad Martens in 1837. In his later years he and his wife lived at 'Rockleigh Grange', Edward Street, North Sydney with their daughter and son-in-law. He died 1 August 1860 aged 81 years.

**21. LITHGOW, William**

F01

Born 1st January 1784 in Scotland. He was educated at Edinburgh University and arrived in Sydney in May 1824 as Assistant Commissary-General of NSW. In 1827 he was appointed Auditor-General of Colonial Accounts. He resigned from the Legislative Council in 1848, and he retired as Auditor-General in 1852. As well as his Governmental responsibilities, he also served on several Bank Boards and provisional committees, amassing considerable financial holdings. He died on 11 June 1864 at his home, 'St. Leonards Lodge' (which was formerly located a few streets from the Cemetery) aged 80. The City of Lithgow bears his name.