

## Three Murderers

On 12 May 1899, the bodies of three executed prisoners were exhumed from the Dunedin Prison yard where the new Courthouse was about to be built, and transferred to an unmarked grave at the Northern Cemetery. The site of the grave is unknown.

### The case of William Jarvey - 1865

Captain **William Jarvey**, the skipper of the *Titania*, which ran between Dunedin and Invercargill, was said to be abusive to his suffering wife Catherine. Jarvey had often been seen with a younger woman at the Dunedin port, and when Jarvey stayed away from home two or three days a week, Catherine accused him of adultery.

A few days later, Jarvey bought a sublimate mixed with strychnine from Luke and Co. in Princes Street, claiming he wanted to rid his ship of rats. That night Catherine was vomiting but recovered, although complaining of a bad taste in her mouth. Four days later, Jarvey returned to the chemist and obtained pure strychnine to finish the rats off. At night he gave Catherine some 'quinine' to help her recovery. Later, Jarvey got the doctor, saying that his wife had taken a very bad fit, but the doctor arrived to find her already dead.



*Jarvey's death-mask*

After three months, Jarvey's daughter Elizabeth went to the police, and the body was exhumed for forensic examination. The tests, which were carried out in Melbourne, showed traces of rat poison, and Jarvey was eventually found guilty of murder and was hanged on 24 October 1865.

### The case of John Jones - 1866

Richard Atkinson, a farmer and gardener at Waipori, was hanging up meat when he was stabbed in the abdomen for no apparent reason. The attacker was twenty-five year old **John Jones**, alias John Poole, alias John King. Richard's daughter was also attacked.

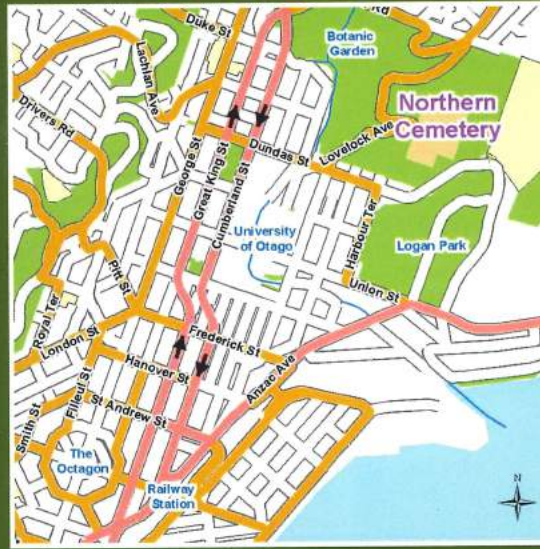
Richard died seven days later on 30 December 1865. Part of the defence was that he died as a result of his medical treatment. The jury took this into account when finding Jones guilty, and recommended mercy, but he was hanged on 6 April 1866.

### The case of Ah Lee - 1880

On 4 August 1880, **Ah Lee**, a Chinese gold miner, was accused of the murder of a harmless and kindhearted woman called Mary Young. In a crime which became known as the Kyeburn murder, he was said to have bashed her with thirty- to fifty-pound rocks, and was arrested, along with Mary Young's gardener.

The gardener, Lee Guy, was set free, but Ah Lee was hanged on 6 November 1880, at the age of twenty-four, protesting his innocence.

Until this day, some uncertainty remains as to whether Ah Lee was the man who committed this crime. A police search of all the Chinese huts in the district had brought to light a bloodsoaked pair of trousers with a stone in one of its pockets in the hut of Ah Lee, but he had killed a sheep the day before, perhaps explaining the blood.



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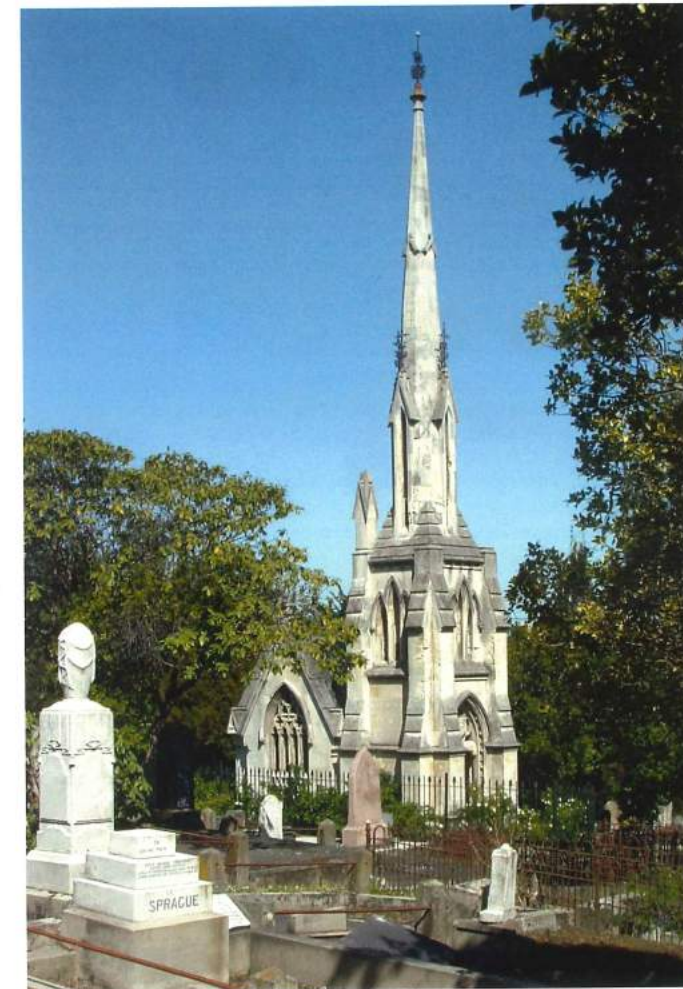
## Tragedy Trail



The Northern Cemetery abounds in tragic tales

Left: A headstone depicts the anchor of the sunken Tairaroa

Below: William Larnach's family tomb





## A Famous Shipwreck

The sinking of the SS 'Wairarapa' - 1894

Block 26, Plot 1A

It was eight minutes past midnight on 29 October 1894 when the SS *Wairarapa*, en route from Sydney to Auckland, being well off course, struck the northern cliffs of Great Barrier Island.

On that terrible night, in the foggy weather the lifeboats were launched but in the confusion only two of them reached shore. Horses, sheep and people were in the water everywhere. Two of the crew swam ashore with lines, and these were used to haul many of the passengers clinging to the rigging through the water to the safety of dry land.



Of a total of 271 passengers, 135 lost their lives, twelve of them from Dunedin. The memorial above was erected to three Dunedin stewardesses, **Annie MacQuaid**, **Elizabeth Crinrod** and **Charlotte McDonald**. Annie was awarded a posthumous award for bravery. She tried to save the life of a little girl by giving her own lifejacket to the child. Both of them were swept off by the next wave and drowned. The Union Steamship Company of Port Chalmers funded this memorial to the three local Stewardesses.



Annie MacQuaid

## Death of a Sportsman

An Oamaru jockey falls - 1895

Block 33, Plot 66A



**William Moody Campbell** was a jockey who, as fate would have it, was very badly injured at the Oamaru Racecourse. He died as a result of those injuries at the Globe Hotel in Oamaru on 8 April 1895, aged twenty-eight. His body was brought from Oamaru to the Dunedin Northern Cemetery.

Although the ravages of time have weathered his gravestone, the outline of a jockey's cap with a whip angled underneath is still visible.

## Fire in the Octagon

Twelve people die - 1879

Block 32, Plot 21 Taylor

Block 101, Plot 5 Martin



Early in the morning of 8 September 1879 a devastating fire took the lives of 12 people including **Robert Wilson**, editor of the *Otago Witness*, his wife and 4 of his 6 children. It is still the worst death toll of a fire in Dunedin.

The large three-storey building designed by local architect David Ross consisted of a basement, shops at ground level, a series of small individual rooms on the first floor, bedrooms occupied by boarders and servants on the second floor, and his offices in a wing.

The fire was believed to have started in the ground floor Cafe Chantant and quickly spread. The roof was completely destroyed and the building interior gutted. More than 50 people were asleep on the upper floors and most of them were cut off from any escape as the only stairwell was quickly in flames. The fire spread rapidly and desperate people threw themselves from the upper windows.

Among the twelve people who met their deaths were **John Taylor**, a shoemaker, who was one of those who jumped, and **George Augustus Martin**, an assistant librarian at the Athenaeum, who was burnt to death while sleeping. Both have unmarked graves that are difficult to locate precisely.

**William Waters**, the operator of the cafe, was later charged with setting fire to the building and also with murdering **Robert Wilson**, but he was found not guilty.

## The Tragedy of William Larnach

The only politician to commit suicide in the Parliament Building - 1898

Block 100, Plot 4

**William Larnach** was born into a Scottish settler family in Australia. In 1867 during the gold rush boom, he brought his family to Dunedin because he had been appointed manager of the new Bank of Otago at age 34 (previous bank building at corner of Princes St at the Exchange). He is best remembered for the grand home he built high on the Otago Peninsula, known as Larnach Castle, begun in 1871, just 20 years after the settlement of Otago.



William was a successful politician and businessman. He was Minister of Mines and as Otago's representative in the House of Representatives his opinions were valued. The firm Guthrie and Larnach, dealing in timber milling for the fast growing city and importing and selling household goods, was a very successful business.

Tragedy struck when Eliza died and in 1880 Larnach had the castle architect **Robert Arthur Lawson** design a replica of his First Church, which is the largest tomb in New Zealand. Mary, Eliza's sister, his second wife died in 1887 and another tragedy struck when in 1891 his favourite daughter **Kate** died of typhoid. All three are buried here. At age 57 he married his third wife 31 year old **Constance de Bathe Brandon**. His children did not accept her and he became increasingly depressed as his land speculation and financial situation worsened.

In 1898 he shot himself in a Parliament Committee room after receiving a letter, which was never found, reputed to refer to an affair between Constance and his eldest son **Donald**. Many have speculated on the reason for his suicide. Was it financial loss caused by the collapse of the new Colonial Bank or was it deteriorating family relationships in which scandal was about to unfold? William is buried in the tomb as is **Donald**, who also shot himself, in 1910.

## A Spectacular Shipwreck

The SS 'Tairaroa' goes down - 1886

Block 111, Plot 6A



After three false starts to pick up late passengers at Wellington, the SS *Tairaroa* set out en route for Dunedin on 11 April 1886. In the afternoon a storm came up with wind, rain and a heavy sea. In the bad weather that evening the ill-fated steamer hit ground off the coast of Kaikoura.

Immediately four lifeboats full of passengers were launched into the rough sea. After a harrowing and difficult eighteen-hour trip, the captain's boat arrived in Blenheim on the next day. The other boats were not so lucky. They all capsized and only three swimmers made it to shore; the other thirty-four passengers drowned.

One of those who drowned was **Robert Monkman**, a twenty-eight year old first officer. A stark anchor on his tombstone bears witness to his fate.

## Thomson Family Tragedy

Tuberculosis takes its toll

Block 138, Plot 8

**George M. Thomson** was an outstanding teacher and educationalist, scientist, and politician, and he loved Dunedin. He was responsible for the foundation of the King Edward Technical College and helped start Columba College for Girls. At Otago Boys High School, he taught **Joseph Mellor**, who became an internationally renowned industrial chemist. **George Thomson** established the Marine Research Station at Portobello. He had a prodigious output of scientific papers, mostly about plants, fish and crustaceans. He represented Dunedin North in parliament.



with the Field Ambulance

Much more could be said about all his many accomplishments, but he also had heartbreaking, difficult events in life.

During army cadet practice at Otago Boys High School, he was accidentally shot in the foot, an injury that caused him pain for many years and eventually required amputation.

He suffered many deaths in his family. His daughter **Florence** was accidentally suffocated at 10 months in 1886. Tuberculosis took its toll, first his wife **Emma** in 1894, then daughter **Annie** in 1909 and later his son **Allan** in 1928. His second wife **Alice** died of cancer within their first year of marriage in 1911. His youngest son **John** died in 1918 while serving during WW1 and is buried in France.

## Mining Disaster

Explosion at the Kaitangata coal mine - 1879

Block 58, Plot 4

Between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. on 21 February 1879, a thunderous explosion startled the little township of Kaitangata in South Otago. A boy was seen entering a drive with a horse, and both were blown fifty feet clear of the pit mouth and killed.

The cause of the explosion was almost certainly the mine manager's eccentric brother, who had the habit of poking about in the mine with an open light.

Rescuers were unable to enter the mine until about noon, since the gas and foul air were too strong. Virtually all of the thirty-four found dead did not die from the actual explosion but by suffocation from firedamp (carbonic acid gas).



**Thomas Bracken** wrote the poem 'In Memoriam' in sympathy.

**Thomas Frew**, a thirty-year-old, was one of the victims.

## A Stagecoach Accident

Two deaths at Trotter's Gorge - 1878

Block 4, Plot 14 Nichols

Block 4, Plot 13 Maitland



**Charles Nichols** had saved his company, Dalgety Rattray, from liquidation when the value of wool doubled with the outbreak of the Prussian War.

Nichols was one of fifteen passengers on the last coach to Christchurch on 21 May 1878, before the advent of rail transport. The coach travelled over the Horse Range and through Trotter's Gorge when suddenly a trace broke and the horses bolted. A sixteen-year-old boy, **James Maitland** seated beside the driver and Nichols,

tried to get his foot on the brake but tragically slipped and fell down amongst the horses' feet. The horses dragged the coach over a 200-foot bank, and it rolled over three times, with the passengers being thrown in all directions.

Nichols was killed outright and Maitland, having suffered concussion and severe injuries, died the next day. They are buried in adjacent plots.

The Nichols family still retain ownership of Kuriheka Homestead, part of the large sheep station they developed 8 km west of Maheno and approximately 21 km southwest of Oamaru.



## Killed by a Train

An act of kindness ends in tragedy - 1906

Block 87, Plot 3

In a very obscure plot lie the remains of mother and daughter. The daughter, **Eva Maud Eason**, was born in Kaikoura, Dunedin. Sadly, the mother died when her heart failed at the age of twenty-nine, when Eva, the youngest of five, was only two years old.

Eva grew up and went to Christchurch to work. In June 1906, she stepped off a train to assist an older woman boarding with her children and parcels—then, trying herself to board the moving train, she slipped and fell.

On 23 June, in her twenty-first year, she died as a result of her injuries in Christchurch Hospital, and was buried with her mother.



## A Fatal Collision in Otago Harbour

The 'Pride of Yarra' sinks - 1863

Block 181, Plot 7

It was 6 July 1863 when the *Pride of Yarra*, owned by **Captain David Curle** (who later died in 1899 and is buried here), was cruising along from Port Chalmers to Dunedin with fifty passengers who had recently arrived from England on board.

As the *Pride of Yarra* was passing near Blanket Bay (now known as Sawyers Bay) on the Otago harbour, visibility was very poor. Another vessel, the *Favourite*, came directly towards her, moving very fast. The two vessels collided with a violent impact and in a very short time the *Pride of Yarra* turned over on her side.

Twelve people in the back of the cabin were unable to get out in time as she went down.

Among the dead were the newector of Otago Boys High School, the Rev M. Campbell, and his family, who are buried in the Southern Cemetery. A public funeral was attended by two thousand people, almost the whole of Dunedin at that time.



## A Work Accident

Death at a flour mill - 1893

Block 196, Plot 46



In the late 1880s safety in the workplace was largely overlooked. On 24 October 1893 the Crown Roller Mill of Dunedin suffered its worst recorded accident. **Josiah Evans**, the twenty-six year old foreman at the mill, died of injuries he received when he was caught up in a revolving belt.

Fortunately, in today's society there are health and safety regulations in place to prevent such accidents.

Monumental Inscription EVANS

In loving memory of **Josiah** the beloved husband of **Lilian Mary Evans** Who was accidentally killed At the Crown Roller Mills Dunedin 24th Oct 1893

Aged 26 yrs

"A sudden change in a moment fell no time to bid his friends farewell think this not strange death happens until today was mine to-morrow you may fall"







David Curle

Eva Eason

Thomas Frew

George Thomson

James Maitland

Charles Nichols

George Martin

Robert Monkman

William Larnach

William Campbell

Josiah Evans

John Taylor

Annie MacQuaid

Information Centre

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