

## Symonds Street Cemetery

# Rose Trail

Trail guide for the Jewish, Presbyterian and Catholic areas



## Auckland's oldest public cemetery

This trail guide will show you many interesting parts of the Jewish, Presbyterian and Catholic sections of the Symonds Street Cemetery.

You'll uncover the stories of many interesting people who were buried here, as well as those of significant specimen trees and old roses in this part of the cemetery, which is also an important urban forest..

To walk the trail will take about 30 minutes. Follow the red markers. It is the most accessible part of Auckland's oldest public cemetery.

Most of this trail follows formed paths. Please do not walk across the graves.

There are two more self-guided trails on the other side of Symonds Street. The Hobson Walk covers many important graves in the Anglican and General/Wesleyan sectors. Bishop Selwyn's Path and the Waiparuru Nature Trail have more detail about Grafton Bridge and the ecology of the forested gully. You can access more information on our mobile app (see back page).





Early view of Auckland, showing the ridgeline that is now Symonds Street. Mitford, John Guise, 1843. [Alexander Turnbull Library, Ref: E-216-f-111.](#)

## What came before

This cemetery is located at a cross roads of Māori trails inland from the coastal fishing villages of Horotiu and Waipapa at the bottom of Queen Street and Parnell Rise to nearby Pā (fortified villages) at Maungawhau-Mt Eden. The Newton Gully is called Te Uru Karaka which had a tended orchard of karaka trees, the fruit of which were a source of food and medicine while the caterpillar found in the leaf litter was burnt and combined with shark oil to produce the ink for moko (Māori tattoo).

## This part of the cemetery

Different denominations (churches within the same religion) have varying approaches to theology (the study of God and religion). Five cemeteries were laid out here, to allow space for different religious communities' burials.

They were for Anglican, Catholic, Jewish, Presbyterian, and General (including Wesleyan/Methodist) burials. The open space at the corner of Symonds Street and Karangahape Road, around the large bronze sculpture is unofficially known as Pigeon Park. It was part of the area originally allocated for Jewish burials, but this was never used as a cemetery.

## Who you were, counted

Nineteenth century society in New Zealand was structured along denominational lines. What church you belonged to had a major influence on your status, your connections, and your opportunities. That's why this cemetery was so clearly divided into denominational areas. They reflected the ratio of people of different churches in Auckland at the time.

Influence meant the Anglicans got first choice and the biggest site. Presbyterians were initially dissatisfied with their allotment, saying it had the poorest views. The Catholic Cemetery once connected to St Benedict's Church, now on the other side of the motorway.

## Heritage and botanical discovery

Information about the graves is found in this Trail Guide, with more in the STQRY app. Trees on this trail are identified by labels on the ground near their bases. There is also more information on the ecology of the entire urban forest of the cemetery in the STQRY app.

## Old roses: living antiques

The roses growing in profusion over the graves are heritage items too. Many are 'old roses' – cultivars that went out of fashion. Old roses usually have more, smaller, and more open flowers. Modern varieties usually have bigger, heavier blooms.

Volunteers from the Symonds Street Cemetery Friends and the Heritage Roses Society work together to maintain the roses, and to prepare for a fine show in the summer. If you'd like to join in, contact them on their Facebook pages.

▶ [Start the walk at entrance A, go into the Jewish section, keep to the right and walk to the old gate.](#)



Bark of the cork oak.

### 1 Cork oak (*Quercus suber*)

Evergreen, from Portugal, Spain and western Mediterranean

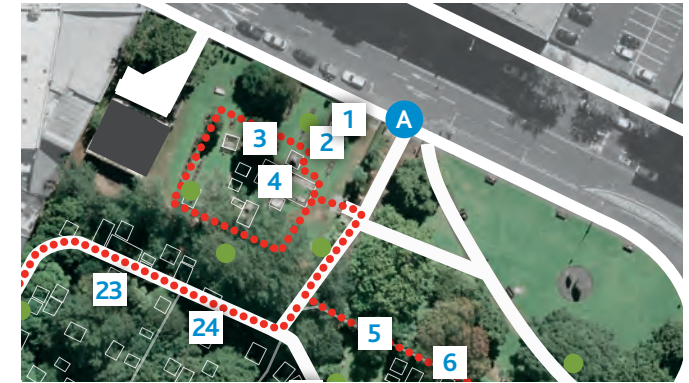
The main feature of cork oaks is their thick, soft bark, which is the source for wine corks. The insulating bark is an adaptation to forest fire.

Cork oaks can be tall trees, up to 20m, but are usually shorter in their natural habitat.

### 2 Rosa Blanc Double de Coubert

Also known as The Muslin Rose, this variety was planted in 2005 in the cemetery, by Heritage Roses Society members. It's a rugosa rose, bred by Charles Cochet in France in 1892.

The flowers are white clusters of petals with a strong fragrance, which open out into flat blooms during summer and



autumn, and sometimes forms bright orange rose hips.

Blanc Double de Coubert grows to a bush up to 2.15m high, and is recommended for colder climates.

### 3 Italian cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens 'stricta'*)

Evergreen conifer, native to eastern Mediterranean region.

These trees have long-standing spiritual associations. This may be from their shape, and their scented wood, which was used in the doors of St Peter's basilica in Rome.



Rosa Blanc Double de Coubert.



Italian Cypress.

Cypresses are symbols of mourning in many religions – Christian, Jewish, Muslim – and are a feature of cemeteries around the world. They are resistant to fire.

▶ [The Nathans' inclined slab tombs, in an eastern Mediterranean style, are in a fenced plot in the Jewish sector.](#)



David Nathan, 1861. John Schmidt, [Alexander Turnbull Library](#), Ref: 1/2-004975-C.

#### 4 Nathan family plot

David Nathan landed in Kororareka in the Bay of Islands on February 21, 1840. He had sailed from Sydney on January 31 on the barque *Achilles* and arrived just two weeks after the signing of the historic Treaty of Waitangi.

Nathan set up a store on the waterfront at Kororareka (Russell), stocked with goods he had brought from England. When it became clear that the capital would be transferred to Auckland, he shifted too.

By August 1841 Nathan had built a wooden store on the corner of Shortland Crescent and High Street. Trade prospered, and by 1853 he had built a brick store and warehouse. He was granted an auctioneer's licence in 1842 and acted as a shipping agent, obtaining the agency of the Shaw Savill Shipping Company in 1858. He owned several small trading vessels and became a substantial property owner in the city.

His marriage in 1841 to Rosetta Aarons was the first formal Jewish ceremony held in New Zealand. One of their sons, Laurence David, became an equal partner in LD Nathan & Company – which went on to become one of the most successful businesses in New Zealand. After Rosetta's death in 1864, Nathan married Edith Barrow Montefiore in 1871. They had no children.

▶ [Head back out of the Jewish cemetery, turn right, then left along the rock wall, into the Presbyterian section.](#)



Male kauri cone.

#### 5 Kauri (*Agathus australis*)

Evergreen conifer, endemic to New Zealand.

The biggest trees in New Zealand forests, though not the tallest. They evolved massive trunks, without lower branches. This species is unique to the upper North Island.

Kauri timber is highly valued for boatbuilding and furniture-making. Gum that seeps from the tree trunks was used as an

ingredient in making varnish. Excessive weeping of gum shows an unhealthy tree.

The trees are threatened by kauri dieback disease, a soil-borne pathogen which causes tree death. You can help stop the disease spreading by cleaning your shoes before and after being near kauri trees.

#### 6 Liquidambar (*Liquidambar styraciflua*)

Deciduous, native to SE USA and Mexico, with a vibrant display of red autumn leaves.

Their distinctive spiky fruit have many nicknames: burr balls, gum balls, space bugs, monkey balls, bommyknockers, sticker balls, or goblin bombs.



Liquid amber fruit.

#### 7 Thomas and Catherine Henderson

Blacksmith makes good: Thomas Henderson was born in Dundee, Scotland, in 1810. He and his wife Catherine answered the call for tradesmen to emigrate to New Zealand. They left Gravesend on the barque *London* in 1840, and arrived in Wellington on 15 December. Their infant son George died on the voyage.

The monument for Thomas and Catherine Henderson.



The Hendersons, with Catherine's brothers John and Henry Macfarlane immediately went to Auckland, arriving before the first European-style houses had even been built.

Henderson built the Commercial Hotel at a cost of \$2000. He employed about 300 Māori in gum digging. He developed New Zealand's first commercial sailing ship fleet, the Circular Saw Line, and also traded in copra from the Pacific Islands. Henderson sold off the sailing ships *Constance*, *Kate* and *Neva*, and bought the 500 ton steamships *Lord Ashley*, *Airdale* and *Haversham*.

Henderson also helped establish the Bank of New Zealand, the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company, the New Zealand Insurance Company and the Auckland Gas Company. The Auckland suburb of Henderson bears his name.

Thomas and Catherine Henderson are buried side-by-side in the Presbyterian section. Their headstone in an architectural form symbolically represents the house of God in miniature.

▶ [Carefully cross the cemetery towards the diagonal path.](#)



Rosa William Lobb.

#### 8 Rosa William Lobb

Also known as Duchesse d'Istrie and Old Velvet Moss, this rose variety is widely grown in New Zealand. It was bred in 1855 by Jean Laffay, and named after William Lobb, a Cornish plant collector, who introduced to England the monkey-puzzle tree from Chile and the massive sequoia from North America.

Flowers are a mauve or purple blend displaying the centres of golden yellow stamens. Strong fragrance. Large, very full (up to 50 petals) old-fashioned, quartered bloom form.

#### 9 Red horse chestnut (*Aesculus x carnea*)

Deciduous, native to Greece, but found throughout Europe. The chestnuts – also called 'conkers' – are used in a children's game. They are toxic and cannot be eaten.





Isabella Watson.

## 10 Isabella Watson

Isabella Watson was only four years old when she died in 1870, probably from one of the infectious diseases of the time – cholera, diphtheria, influenza, or measles.

The headstone is remarkable in the Symonds Street Cemetery, being the only one remaining that is topped by a realistic statue, which is obviously a portrait of the child Isa – not a generic angel.

▶ Turn left along the paved path.

## 11 Elizabeth Knox

Elizabeth Knox died in 1908. She and her husband Charles (who died in 1871) gained a reputation as philanthropists, who generously assisted fellow settlers. They came from Northern Ireland in the 1840s.

They are buried beneath a large obelisk of Scottish granite in the Presbyterian sector. In her will, Elizabeth left £91,500 of which £44,000 was earmarked for various charities including the Sailors Home, the Veteran's Home and others. The Press newspaper 22 October 1908 had a headline: "Munificent bequests to charity."

Money was also stipulated for a Home for Incurables and a Night Shelter for the Homeless to be set up. The Elizabeth Knox Home for the Elderly is still in existence.

▶ Opposite the path is one of the heritage roses.

## 12 Rosa Anais Segalas

A widely-grown rose in New Zealand. The breeder of this rose could be either Jean-Pierre Vibert France or Parmentier Belgium. The variety was released in 1837. Named after Ségalas, Anais (1814–1895) a popular French poet, novelist and playwright.



Elizabeth Knox, philanthropist. [Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, AWNS-19081029-14-1.](#)



Rosa Anais Ségalas.



Kōwhhai.

Flowers are a rich deep mauve-pink in colour, paling towards the edges. Strong fragrance. They are a flattish cushion form, about 4cm across and arranged in clusters.

A free-flowering, healthy rose that does well in poor soil, and is good as a pot plant.

▶ Head up towards entrance F on Symonds Street.

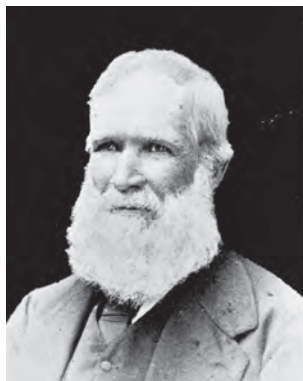
## 13 Kōwhhai (*Sophora micophylla*)

Semi-evergreen (loses its leaves for a short time each year), endemic to New Zealand.

Kōwhhai trees flower early in the spring. Tū enjoy the nectar from the flowers and kererū eat the young leaves.

Kōwhhai became one of the first New Zealand trees shown in English plant catalogues as early as 1783.

▶ Turn right by entrance F, just before the wall, to reach the next interesting grave.



## 14 Archibald Clark

Archibald Clark (1805 – 17 October 1875) was a 19th-century Member of Parliament for Auckland East, then Franklin in the Auckland Region, New Zealand. He was the first Mayor of Auckland in 1851.

Archibald Clark, first mayor of Auckland, c1875. [Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, 7-A5070.](#)



His company, Archibald Clark and Sons, made clothing and was a wholesaler. At one stage they had 500 employees.

Clark is thought to have been New Zealand's first token issuer in 1857. The tokens were issued because of a shortage of small coins. They would not have been universally accepted (like real money), but would have functioned more like the retail loyalty points schemes we know today.

Clark's son, James McCosh Clark, was Mayor of Auckland in the 1870s. He erected a tall gothic monument to his father in the south-east corner of the Presbyterian sector.

▶ Directly behind Archibald Clark's grave stand some young karaka trees.

## 15 Karaka (*Corynocarpus laevigatus*)

Evergreen, endemic to New Zealand. Many karaka trees have self-seeded in the cemetery.

The gullies to the north of Symonds Street Cemetery were known as a significant karaka grove by Māori.



Karaka were one of the few trees that were cultivated by Māori. The kernels of the fruit were an important food source – but they had to be carefully prepared by soaking in running water, and days of cooking, to remove poison. The orange fruit are a food for kererū New Zealand pigeons.

Karaka fruit – food for kererū.

## 16 English oak groves (*Quercus robur*)

Deciduous trees from Europe, oaks can grow very quickly in New Zealand conditions – but these in the Symonds Street Cemetery haven't done so. This is perhaps because of the poor soils (for them) in this location.

Oaks produce very hard and durable timber, but it can take over 100 years for the trees to be ready for harvesting.

► Go downhill through the oak grove, then make your way up the hill through the cemetery to the Catholic Memorial.

## 17 Catholic Cemetery decimated

The Catholic Cemetery once extended right up to St Benedict's – the red brick Church you can see across the motorway. The brick church was built in 1888, to replace an impressive wooden church that had burned down in 1886. Lack of funds meant the new church was not properly



The wooden St Benedict's Church in the 1880s. [Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, 4-995.](#)

completed until 1955. When the motorways were built through these gullies in the mid 1960s, large parts of the Catholic (and Anglican) sections of the Symonds Street Cemetery were removed and the connection with the church was lost. Exhumed remains were re-interred under memorials now within the Anglican and Catholic sections. More than 2,000 Catholic graves were disturbed in this way. There were more graves uncovered which had no headstone or record of burial – so the numbers of disturbed remains is higher than the names on the memorial.

## 18 Rosa Irish Elegance

Planted here by members of the Heritage Roses Society,



to acknowledge the numbers of Irish people named in the Catholic Memorial.

► There is a line of headstones salvaged from the motorway construction, set flat in the lawn here.



Patrick Dignan's headstone is on the ground near the Catholic Memorial.

committee responsible for building St Patrick's Cathedral. Irish and Catholic functions were often held at 'Dignan's Paddock' in Wyndham Street. He part-owned the *New Zealand Freeman's Journal*; and was on the board of St Peter's School.

In his political career he supported Māori representation in parliament because they were "natural owners of the soil" and had "a right to full share of the liberties which we claim for ourselves in this country."

Dignan died at New Plymouth, on board the *Takapuna*, bound for Auckland in 1894. Mary died ten years later. Their Point Chevalier land was subdivided in 1911.

## 19 Patrick Dignan

One of the earliest settlers, Dignan was an Irish Catholic who became prominent in Auckland. He married Mary Derron at the Auckland Catholic Church on 25 July 1846. They had 13 sons and one daughter, a house in Wyndham Street, and a 121ha farm at Point Chevalier, with a large 'summer house.'

Dignan turned to the hospitality trade in 1849, buying the Clanricarde Hotel in Albert Street. He was on the



Constable Naughton's headstone is next to that of Patrick Dignan.

*Accident at Helensville* (in which his own wife was blown into a creek, and he couldn't help her when he got stuck in mud); *Oddfellows Demonstration at Helensville*; *The Fatal Fire* (more details on the app).

This last incident, in which he pulled the dead body of the cook from a fire at the hotel, proved too much for him. Mental unease manifested itself in a mania for money. Soon after, he was committed to the Whau Lunatic Asylum. He died in May 1884.

► Angle downwards to the western side of the cemetery and entrance G.



Tōtara fruit.

► Make your way along the western edge of the cemetery, past entrance G.

## 20 Constable Naughton

Constable Naughton is one of those characters who crops up in many searches through historical newspapers – mostly because of his career as a very busy policeman. Sadly, this work finally got to him.

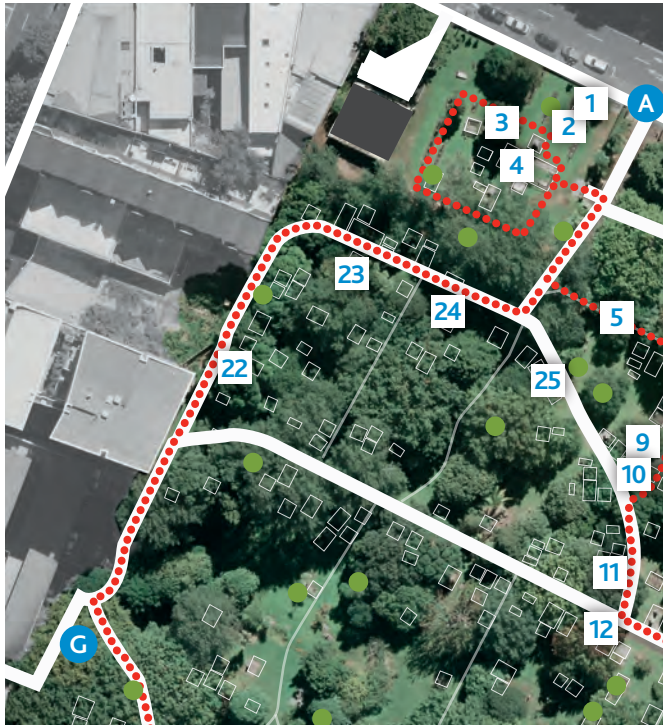
Newspaper headlines read as a case file of Constable Naughton's work load: *A Dead Body Found Floating in the Harbour*; *The Maori Robber at Helensville*; *The Wreck Near Kaipara*; *A Young Lady Stabbed by a Lover*; *A Peculiar*

## 21 Tōtara (*Podocarpus totara*)

Evergreen, endemic to New Zealand.

Māori also knew tōtara as rākau rangitira – 'chiefly trees.' This is because the timber has always been prized as the best for building large waka (canoes), or carvings of ancestors at marae (Māori meeting houses).

Sheets of the inner bark were ingeniously folded, like origami, to make water containers or splints for broken limbs.



## 22 James Strange Meiklejohn

Captain James Strange Mucklejohn (changed to Meiklejohn), his wife Catherine and sons James, John, Sandy, William, Robert, Lemuel, and Septimus, arrived in New Zealand in 1858. They came aboard the brigantine *Union*, which they built at Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and sailed the world for two years before settling in New Zealand in 1858.

The sandstone headstone of James Strange Meiklejohn.

The Meiklejohns established a busy shipyard at Whangateau Harbour, near Matakana, and built the first sailing scows that had a great influence on coastal shipping around the North Island.

Captain Meiklejohn is buried in the Presbyterian section at the Symonds Street Cemetery, while many of his descendants are laid to rest at Matakana and Whangateau. His gravestone has a weeping willow, a symbol for sorrow.



The granite monument of the Leys family (20) shows very little decay.

▶ Turn right just before you reach the Jewish cemetery area.

## 23 Harder, better, dearer

Some granite headstones look much newer than their dates suggest. This is because polished granite is the hardest, most impervious stone material for outdoor memorials. On the Measure of Hardness Scale (MOHS), where diamonds are rated 10, natural granite is between 6 and 7.

Although marble was commonly used in 19th century headstones, it has a MOHS rating of only 3. It was used because it was easier to cut, polish and carve. Salt in the air and pollution decompose the calcite structure in marble, so it erodes more quickly than granite.

Most of the headstones, monuments and cast-iron railings for grave surrounds were imported. These heavy items made useful ballast for sailing ships on voyages from Great Britain.

▶ There are a few more heritage roses along the formed path.

## 24 Rosa Adelaide d'Orleans

This Hybrid Sempervirens rose was bred by Monsieur Jacques, in 1826. He was head gardener to Duc d'Orleans, who later became the King of France.

This rose is named after Louise Marie Adélaïde Eugénie d'Orléans (1777–1847) one of

Rosa Adelaide d'Orleans.



Softening of marble carved edges is partly caused by air pollution.

the twin daughters of Philippe d'Orléans and his wife, Louise Marie Adélaïde de Bourbon.

Flowers are in creamy white clusters with pink buds, delicate primrose scent. Some purplish flecks on the reverse edges. Medium, very full (more than 41 petals), cluster-flowered bloom form. They bloom once in spring or summer.

## 25 Rosa Charles de Mills

The distinctive mauve or mauve blend flowers of Charles de Mills are easy to identify. This Gallica variety was developed by an unknown Dutch breeder before 1786.

The rose was probably named after a Charles Mills who was a Director of the East India Company, elected 1785.

The strong fragrant flowers are large and lightly cup-shaped and filled with a multitude of small petals.



Rosa Charles de Mills.

## More stories

Our free mobile app (on the STQRY platform) has many more fascinating stories about graves of interesting people, and social, historic and ecological themes. Scan this QR code to download.



## More trails

There are two more trail guides for Symonds Street Cemetery. You can download these guides at [aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](http://aucklandcouncil.govt.nz) or from the app.

## Grave database

Detailed information about the location and names of the people interred in this cemetery can be found in the Digital Library on the [Auckland Libraries website](http://Auckland Libraries website)