

# Welcome to the Balclutha Cemetery

*Welcome to the Balclutha Lawn Cemetery, which was established in 1946. The map to the right is designed to assist you to locate the burial plot of your loved ones. Burial records are available for viewing at the Clutha i-SITE, 4 Clyde St, Balclutha, or from the Clutha District Council's main administration office, 1 Rosebank Tce, Balclutha.*

Until 1868, there was no official cemetery at Balclutha.

At a town meeting held 13 May 1868, Mr John Barr, the first official paid punt man in Balclutha, raised the need for a cemetery as a matter of "undoubted precedence", a catalyst for which was the devastating whooping cough. The meeting agreed and elected a governing body for the land at Norfolk Street and Totara Avenue allocated for a cemetery by a Government survey of townships. This cemetery later became known as the Balclutha Old Cemetery.

Interestingly, at the same town meeting, the need for some form of local government for Balclutha was first raised. Around 1871, management of the (Old) Cemetery was vested in the newly formed Balclutha Town Council.

In late 1875, the (Old) Cemetery came under considerable discussion. Councillor Hope advised the cemetery was in a "ruinous" state and that children had been pulling up flowers and causing general damage. The Town Council cautioned parents against allowing their children to visit the cemetery unless under the "charge of a responsible party".

By 1889, the condition of the (Old) Cemetery had improved dramatically, with Mayor John Dunne reporting the cemetery had "never before been in so good order".

Fire destroyed all early cemetery record and unfortunately, to this day, many plot details remain unavailable for those interred pre-1912. However, the Balclutha Genealogy Society is working hard to tabulate fresh material.

In 1933, one Adam Begg wrote to the Balclutha Borough Council offering £30 for the upkeep of two plots in the (Old) Cemetery for all time. The offer was declined, but an offer to cut the grass covered portion for 20 years was agreed to.

In 1938, Council sought a direction on allowing soldier's wives to be buried in soldier's plots, but after an inquiry this was not allowed. In 1943, however, Council showed its appreciation to the sacrifices made by soldiers at war by approving expenditure on advertising Anzac Day services and obtaining a wreath. This practise is still carried out today.

In early 1944, the Medical Officer of Health was invited to Balclutha to inspect ground for a new lawn cemetery (this present one) and on 30 August, Council resolved to take the land required under the Public Works Act.

William Thomas Renton, 46, of Waitepeka, was the first person interred at the lawn cemetery on 3 April 1948.

Improvements were made at both the old and new cemeteries at the start of the new millennium.

The Memorial Beam at this cemetery was installed in 2001 for people whose loved ones may have been interred elsewhere. A year later, a new access road was put in by the beam and new planting undertaken along the eastern boundary.

In 2008, a Memorial Beam and garden was installed at the free ground area at the old cemetery. The free ground area is where little ones (stillborn babies) were buried in unmarked graves.

In 2009, the Veterans Association of New Zealand donated two large granite headstones to be placed at Returned Services Cemeteries in the district. These have since been placed at the RSA Cemeteries in Balclutha and Tapanui and are an important reminder that the tremendous sacrifices made are not forgotten, both now and in the future.



CLUTHA DISTRICT COUNCIL





BLOCK 6

BLOCK 5

BLOCK 2

You Are Here

MEMORIAL BEAMS

BLOCK 4A

BLOCK 4

BLOCK 3

BLOCK 1

BLOCK 4

ASH BEAM

MILTON

HIGHWAY



# Remembering our heritage



James McNeil

*The Balclutha Old Cemetery is the final resting place of two of the most important figures in Balclutha's history. James McNeil was a founding citizen in 1852, while his son John became the first Mayor of Balclutha in 1870. The South Otago Historical Society takes a look at the life and times of James and John McNeil.*

The establishment of the free church of Scotland in 1843 was soon followed by a search for suitable land for its members to settle in the British colonies. This movement became known as the New Edinburgh settlement and from its inception the McNeil Family of Dumbartonshire, Scotland was part of this iconic diaspora to Otago, New Zealand.

Andrew McNeil set out with the first immigration vessels of 1848 and was joined by his father James and the rest of the family on the Mooltan the following year.

James McNeil took up land on the banks of the Clutha River in 1852 and immediately sent his son John to settle this land with some of the family's cattle. A two roomed bark shanty was built in 1853 and James soon took up residence with his wife Anne. Within the year, James McNeil had two suitable boats built and he placed them on the river establishing a ferry service, giving our community the pioneer name of "Clutha Ferry". During this time the McNeil's hospitality was renowned, on one occasion Mrs McNeil gave up her own bed for three days.

John went on to become an advocate for having the subsequent town proclaimed a municipality and was successful in 1870, he himself becoming the first mayor of Balclutha the following year. Tragically James was struck by a horse at Christmas day sports and died from his injuries in April 1875. He rests at the family plot at the Old Cemetery erected by his eldest son Alexander.

Apart from being the respected founding family of Balclutha, it is acknowledged that the McNeil's pioneer spirit and entrepreneurship established the town as the place to cross the Clutha River - a service that continues to be crucial to the community's ongoing development as the hub of the Clutha District today.



John McNeil



*The map to the left shows where the Old Balclutha Cemetery is in relation to this present Balclutha Cemetery. It also shows the location of the Clutha i-SITE and the Clutha District Council main office where cemetery records are held.*



CLUTHA DISTRICT COUNCIL

