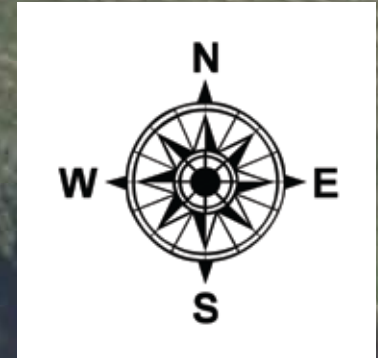


# Balclutha Cemetery





# History of the Balclutha Cemetery

*Welcome to the Balclutha Cemetery, which was established in 1868. The cemetery layout map on this kiosk 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 Street, Balclutha, or from the Clutha District Council's main administration office, 1 Rosebank Terrace, 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 this land at Norfolk Street and Totara Avenue.

Fire destroyed all early cemetery records 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 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 at the time. 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 1944, the Medical Officer of Health was invited to Balclutha to inspect ground for a new lawn cemetery and Council resolved to take the land required. By September 1946, the new Lawn Cemetery was established on the main road heading north out of Balclutha.

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





# Remembering Our Heritage

*The Balclutha 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.

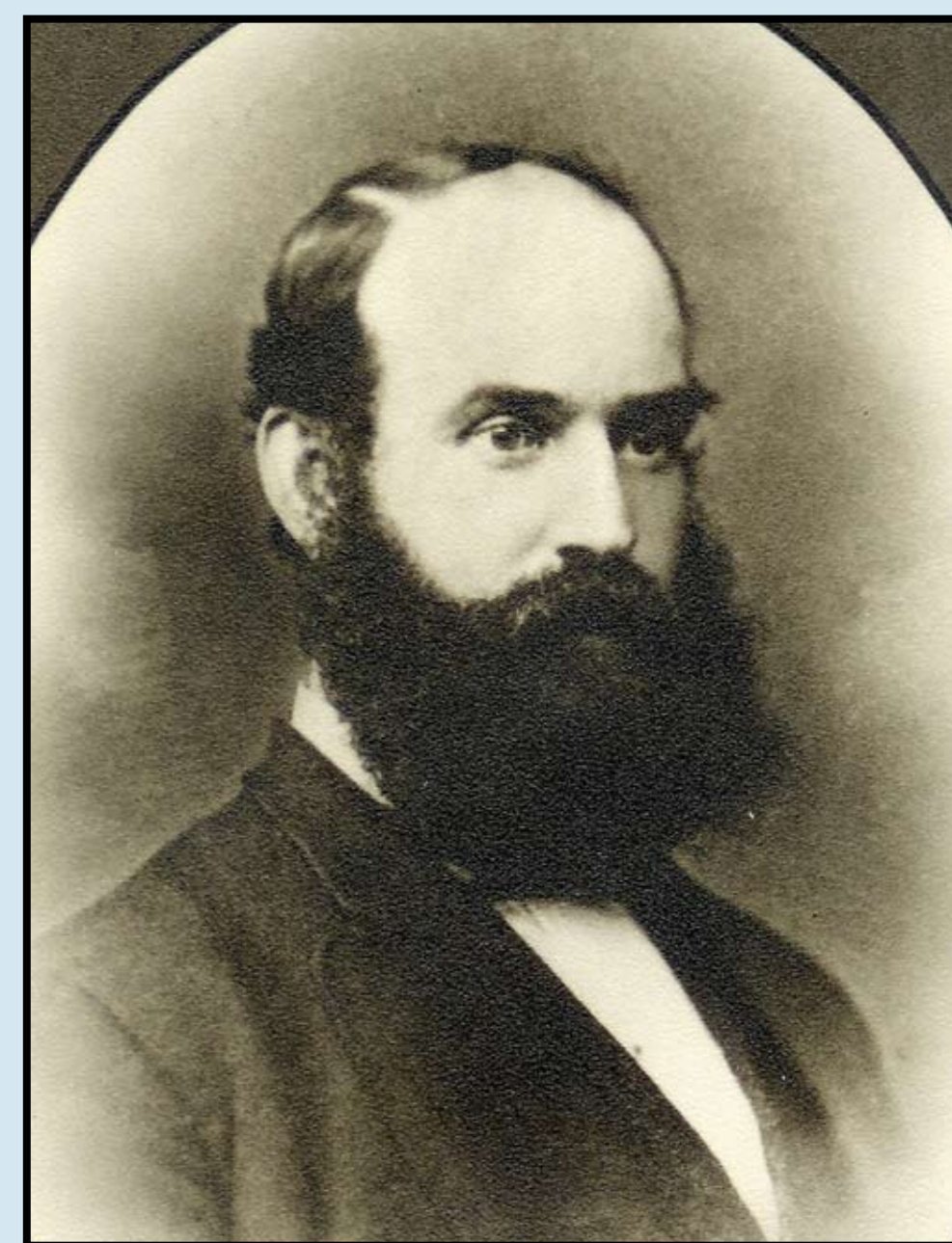
James McNeil took up land on the banks of the Clutha River in 1852 and immediately sent his son John to settle this land with some of the family's cattle. A two roomed bark shanty was built in 1853 and James soon took up residence with his wife Anne. Within the year, James McNeil had two suitable boats 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.



**James McNeil**



**John McNeil**



**The map to the left shows where this Balclutha Cemetery is in relation to the Balclutha Lawn 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**

