History of the Fairfax Cemetery
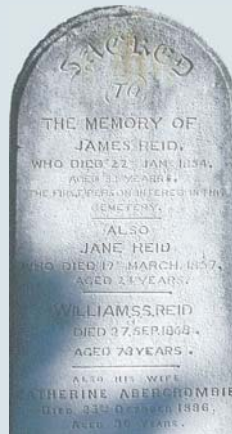
Welcome to the Fairfax Cemetery, which was officially established in 1860. The cemetery layout map on this kiosk is designed to assist you to locate the burial plot of your loved ones. Burial records are available for viewing at the Clutha District Council's Milton Service Centre, which is located at 124-126 Union Street in Milton, or at the Milton Information Centre located at 51-53 Union St.

On 9 April 1860, it was resolved to reserve from public sale, six quarter-acre sections adjacent to the Presbyterian Church at Fairfax for use as a public cemetery.

Mr James Reid, aged 33 years, had been the first person interred here, having died on 22 January 1854. (His headstone is pictured to the right and is located in Block 3, Plot 31).

The pioneer settler on the Tokomairiro, Robert Martin, arrived in New Zealand with his brothers and sisters in 1840. He came to Otago with Charles Kettle's Survey Party, purchasing the land at Fairfax (Tokoiti) in 1850, bringing his cattle with him from Nelson.

Francis Chrystal was also part of Kettle's Party and later built an accommodation house on the north-west corner of Back Road and Forsyth Road. He subsequently purchased land at Akatore (Chrystal's

James Brown

Beach) and built a good sized house which he let to groups holidaying on the coast. Mr Chrystal had wished to be buried in a cave at the beach, but lies peacefully at the Fairfax Cemetery.

When Milton became a borough in 1866, the first Mayor was James Elder Brown.

Mr Brown, with his father, had settled on 105 acres on the Tokomairiro in 1856. In 1860, he sold half an acre on the main south road to one Mr Mansford on which to erect a store. This proved the beginning of the township of Milton. Shortly after, the nearby goldfields discoveries led to much activity on the plains and in Milton, so much so that it was proclaimed an incorporated township by 1866.

Mr Brown was Clerk of this Cemetery for many years before he passed away on 16 January 1900, aged 77 years. His grave is located in Block 1, Plot 25.

Remembering Our Heritage

In October 1873, a farm worker was killed in tragic, yet somewhat ironic, circumstances outside this cemetery while a funeral was taking place.

James Brayley, was driving a dray with a load of manure to his employer's residence. Upon taking the hill leading up to the cemetery gate, the load proved too much for the horses who became restless. Some of the people attending the funeral ran to Mr Brayley's assistance, only to find him lying unconscious between two flax bushes.

Attempts to revive him were unsuccessful. Although no-one saw exactly what happened, it was presumed that in trying to hold the horses, he had tripped and fallen and then one of the horses had trampled him.
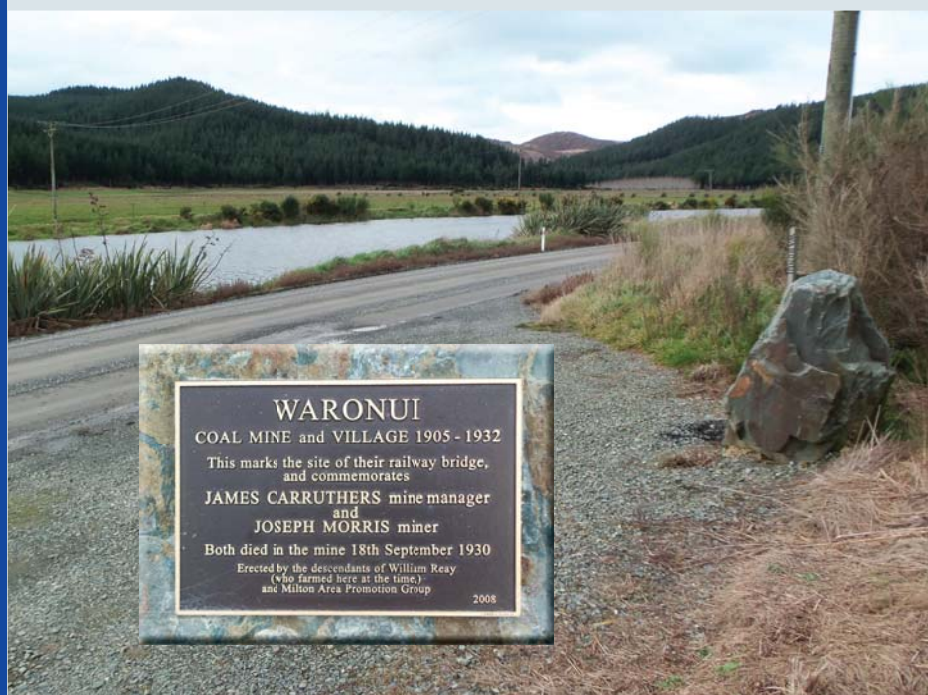
The *Bruce Herald* reported at the time that the same horses were well-known runaways and had caused several previous accidents. Before his death, Brayley himself had expressed apprehension and his desire to leave his employment because of the horses' behaviour.

In December of 1885, the *Bruce Herald* reported that "certain young ladies, who ought to know better" had been detected taking flowers from the cemetery. Those caught red-handed taking flowers from the grave of the late Mrs Conning were warned in no uncertain terms not to do it again!

As with other communities throughout the country, The First World War took its toll on Milton and surrounds.

In February of 1923, the Military Records Office wrote to the Milton Borough Council referring to the late Frederick Graham who was killed in action in France on 29 October 1916. There were no known relatives, but he was a native of Milton who held the British War Medal for meritorious service, as well as a Victory Medal and Plaque and Scroll.

Mr Graham was laid to rest at the Cite Bonjean Military Cemeteries in Armentieres in the north of France, which is pictured here (photos courtesy of Auckland Museum). The Borough Council accepted his medals and agreed to have them mounted and displayed in a place of honour.

Nearby war memorials honouring local fallen soldiers are located at Milton, Milburn, Lovell's Flat and Glenledi.

1930 Waronui Mine Disaster

One of the most infamous incidents in Tokomairiro's history is the Waronui Coal Mine disaster of 18 September 1930 which caused the death of the mine manager and Borough Councillor James Carruthers, as well as mine worker Joseph Morris.

Waronui was once a busy coal mine near Toko Mouth Road and linked to Milton, 9km away, by rail.

The Press Association reported at the time that the two men were overcome by a sudden rush of gas while working on a new air shaft for the mine. Heroically, another mine worker, Robert McDonald, went down the mine shaft by rope to help, but he too was overcome by the gas and was brought back to the surface black in the face and semiconscious.

Mr Carruthers was 40-years-old, married, with a family of three children. He was a returned soldier, having served in the Rifle Brigade and Tunnelling Corps and he had held the position of mine manager for over 10 years.

Mr Morris was also married and had been employed at the mine for a considerable period.

The two men were both laid to rest here and, in 2008, a plaque commemorating the former Waronui township and the lives of Mr Carruthers and Mr Morris was unveiled. The plaque (pictured left) is located in a lay-by on Toko Mouth Rd, about halfway between here and Toko Mouth.

CLUTHA DISTRICT COUNCIL

Clutha Country
where everyone says hello

Fairfax Cemetery

BLOCK 16

BLOCK 15

BLOCK 1

BLOCK 2

BLOCK 3

BLOCK 4

BLOCK 5

BLOCK 6

BLOCK 8

BLOCK 9A

BLOCK 12

BLOCK 9

BLOCK 10

Knoll Street

BLOCK 11

BLOCK 13

BLOCK 14

BLOCK 17A

BLOCK 18

BLOCK 19

Memorial Beam

YOU ARE HERE

BLOCK 17

BLOCK 20

BLOCK 19A

Cemetery Road