

Remembering our heritage

This cemetery was established around 1866, at the time Lawrence was proclaimed a municipality. The old cemetery on the hill on Ardrossan Street behind the Commercial Hotel was closed in 1867 and the consent of relatives of persons interred there was obtained to allow the remains to be moved here. Two of the more notable early headstones were erected "by the youths of Tuapeka" as a tribute to two young men, George Herd, 17, and Alfred Hart, 13, who were tragically killed in a fire in Lawrence on 30 September 1875. About 600 people attended the boys' funeral, which the *Tuapeka Times* described as a "most affecting scene". Unfortunately, Alfred's headstone was badly damaged in high winds in 1878. George's headstone is pictured to the right.



This cemetery is the final resting place of the district's pioneer settlers, George and Helen Munro, who were born in Sutherland, Scotland in 1829 and 1831 respectfully. They arrived at Port Chalmers, near Dunedin, in October 1856 for George to take up employment as a shepherd at Munro's Gully.

In May 1861, George was attending to his sheep run when he met with Gabriel Read. George showed Gabriel where Edward Peters (Black Peter) had prospected at Evan's Flat two year's previously and invited Gabriel to spend the night with him and his family. Gabriel accepted the kind offer. The next morning George walked with Gabriel up the ridge between Munro Gully and the adjacent gully, where the two parted company; George to tend to his stock while Gabriel scrambled his way down through tangled bush to the Tuapeka Stream.

Later that day, Gabriel discovered gold – a major strike which was to set the district and the nation on prosperous new paths.



George Munro



Helen Munro

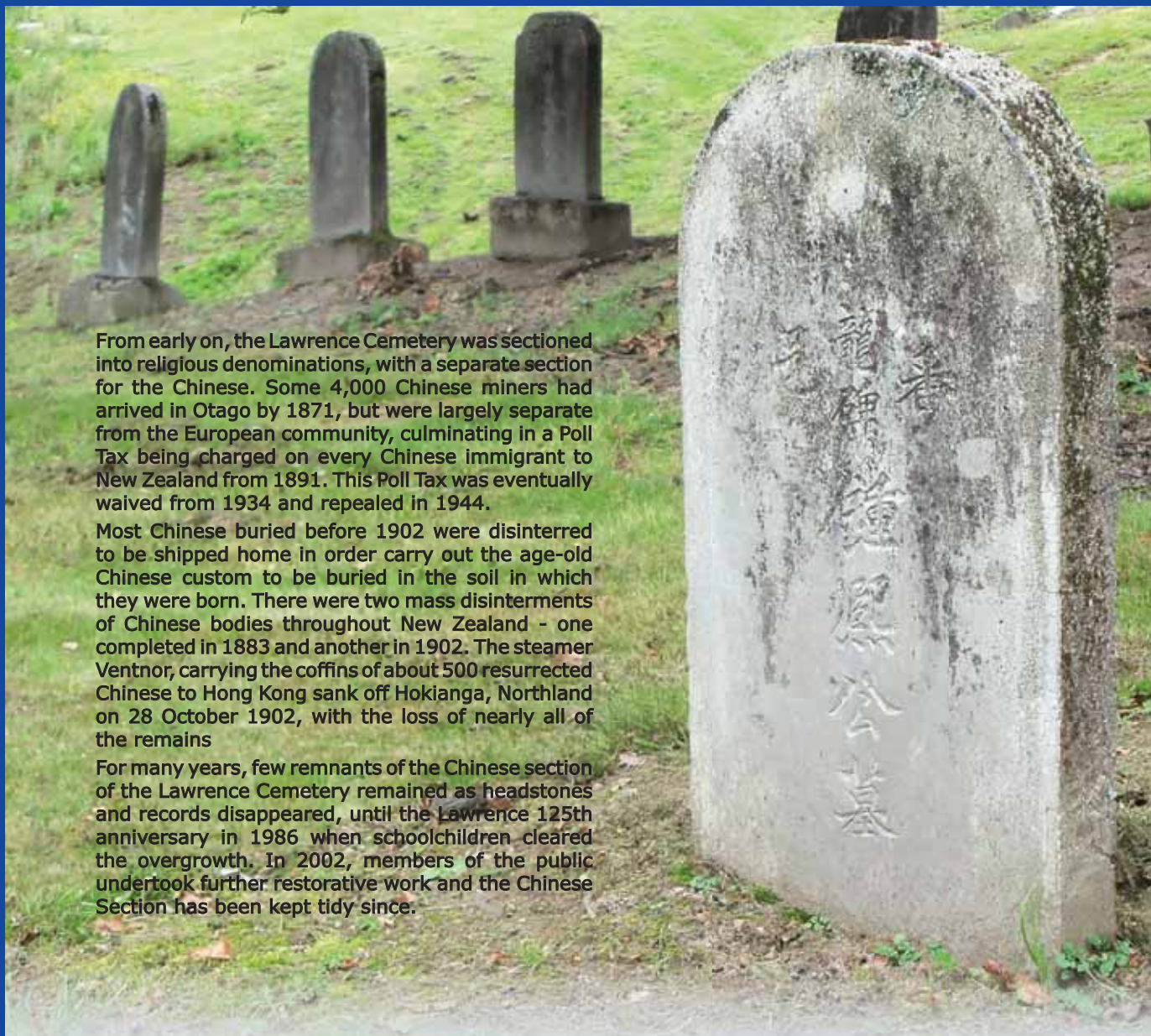
Following Gabriel's discovery, Helen herself did amateur prospecting in Munro's Gully using a dish and butcher's knife. She was successful in finding payable gold and will always be remembered as the first and only woman to discover part of a major goldfield in New Zealand.

The Munros eventually settled in a cottage at Evan's Flat on a hill which is still known as Munro's Hill, a little way along the road named after them just west of Lawrence.

George died 21 July 1912 and Helen passed away 16 June 1913 – their grave is located in the Old Cemetery Section, Plot 3 Block 4.

The Memorial Beam at this cemetery (pictured below) was installed in 2006 for people whose loved ones may have been interred elsewhere. A plaque commemorating Gabriel Read has been placed on the beam, owing to the fact that Gabriel died in Australia (the country of his birth) in 1894.





From early on, the Lawrence Cemetery was sectioned into religious denominations, with a separate section for the Chinese. Some 4,000 Chinese miners had arrived in Otago by 1871, but were largely separate from the European community, culminating in a Poll Tax being charged on every Chinese immigrant to New Zealand from 1891. This Poll Tax was eventually waived from 1934 and repealed in 1944.

Most Chinese buried before 1902 were disinterred to be shipped home in order carry out the age-old Chinese custom to be buried in the soil in which they were born. There were two mass disinterments of Chinese bodies throughout New Zealand - one completed in 1883 and another in 1902. The steamer Ventnor, carrying the coffins of about 500 resurrected Chinese to Hong Kong sank off Hokianga, Northland on 28 October 1902, with the loss of nearly all of the remains

For many years, few remnants of the Chinese section of the Lawrence Cemetery remained as headstones and records disappeared, until the Lawrence 125th anniversary in 1986 when schoolchildren cleared the overgrowth. In 2002, members of the public undertook further restorative work and the Chinese Section has been kept tidy since.



The tomb of one of Lawrence's most recognisable Chinese characters, Sam Chew Lain, dominates surrounding graves at this cemetery, although this is located in the Presbyterian Section.

Sam had been a miner at Victoria in Australia before coming to Otago in the 1860s to mine at Munro's Gully. He was a well known individual in Lawrence and joined another Chinese man named Wong On in the hotel trade where they owned and managed the Chinese Empire Hotel at the Lawrence Chinese Camp. Sam was naturalised in 1872 and later that year married a local girl, Amelia Newbiggins, in one of the first mixed race marriages in the area.

Sam died on 15 March 1903 and his obituary stated that he had "quickly established a reputation for thorough honesty and scrupulous exactness in business matters ... to his countrymen and Europeans alike he has proved in many cases a friend indeed and stories of large hearted generosity are legion".

On his death, Sam's Lodge, the St George Masonic Brotherhood, erected a plaque to him. His estate built his tomb of limestone block walls and a slate roof. His wife, Amelia, was also interred there upon her death in July 1913.



CLUTHA DISTRICT COUNCIL



GABRIELS GULLY
GOLDRUSH 150TH



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STREET

This map is designed to help you find the burial plots of your loved ones. Please refer to the panels on the other side of this kiosk for historical information about the cemetery.