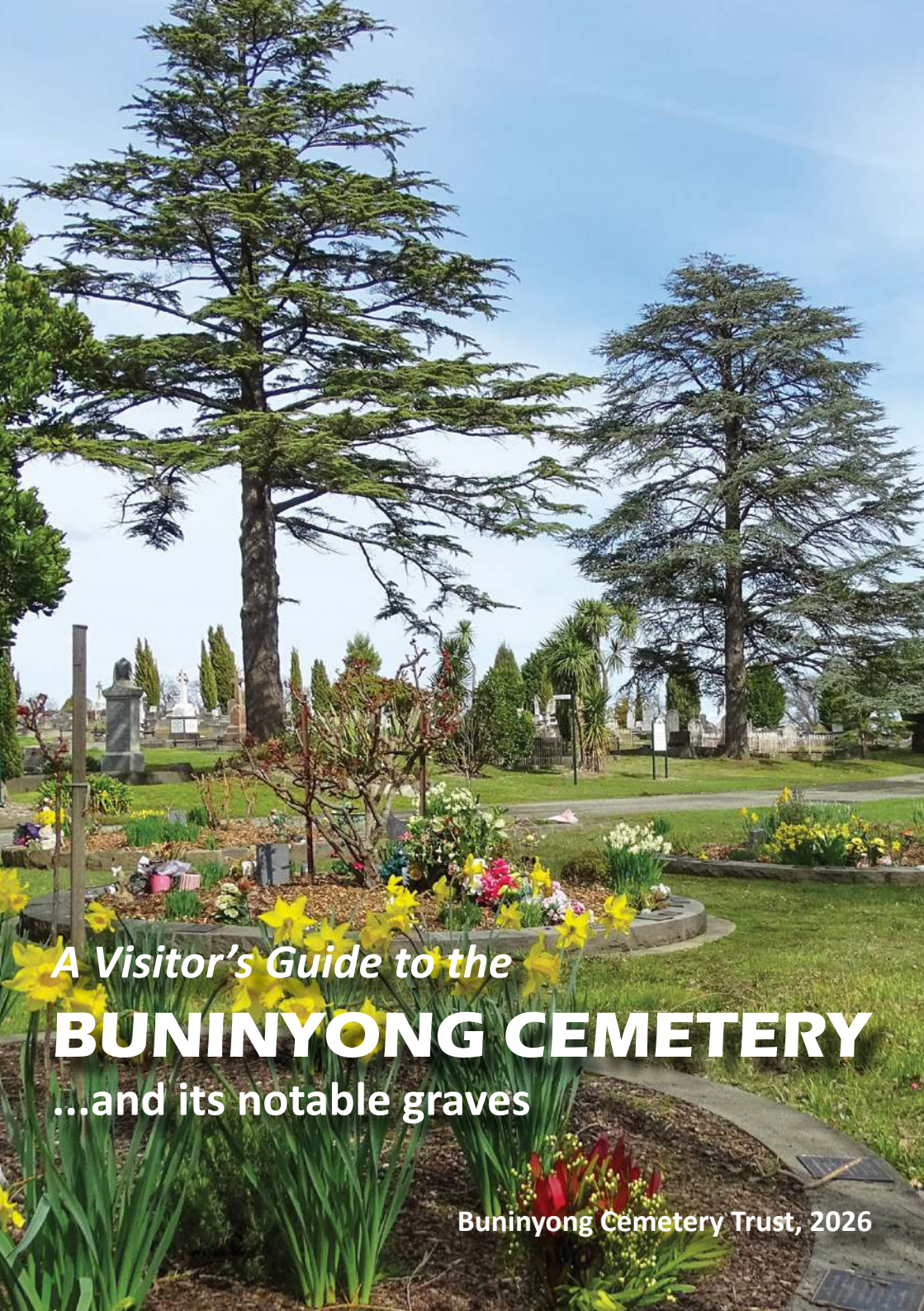

A Visitor's Guide to the

BUNINYONG CEMETERY

...and its notable graves

Buninyong Cemetery Trust, 2026

BURIAL IN BUNINYONG

The Old Burial Ground

Early settlers of Buninyong arrived in the late 1830s with the township being established around 1841. When a death occurred in those days, some persons were buried in locations where they died, such as on pastoral stations, while others were buried in a small, sloping plot of land in Learmonth Street - just to the west of where the old red brick post office still stands.

The area can be recognised by its picket fence and has signage out front (see map opposite).

Now known as the Old Burial Ground, it is unclear who or how many persons are buried there, as no records or headstones have survived. It was not until 1853 that formal registration of births, deaths, and marriages was introduced in Victoria.

The 'New' Cemetery

The present Cemetery located on the Midland Highway some 3 km north-west of the village (see map opposite) was included in a preliminary survey of the township of Buninyong done in 1849 by **Assistant Surveyor Smythe**. Referred to as the *Buninyong General Cemetery*, the 18-acre site, initially of 4777 plots, was divided into denominational sections.

These reflected the-then religious persuasions of the population, comprised mainly of Scottish, English and Irish miners and farmers. There were 1334 Episcopalian (Anglican) plots, 1182 Presbyterian, 1025 Wesleyan, 783 Catholic, 222 Baptist, and 231 plots designated as Independent/Other. There was also a small section of 44 plots reserved for Chinese burials.

The first recorded burial in the 'denominational' area was that of **Elizabeth Gullan** 14 in August 1852, with the local doctor **Dr Richard Power** 24 being buried there soon after, in December of that year. (See map on pages 6-7 for these locations.)

As at 2026 there were 2349 persons buried in the Episcopalian section, Presbyterian (1667), Wesleyan (1723), Catholic (1310), Baptist (103), Independent (101), Chinese(23) and Other (49) – a total of 7298 burials.

A Lawn section at the western side of the cemetery was opened in 1970, with the first burial being that of John Baker. There are 1115 burial plots in this section, all now being sold. A second Lawn section, to the east of Imperial Road (named after the nearby former large gold mine) was opened in 2020. There are 570 plots in this section. By 2026, 1936 persons had been buried in the Lawn sections.

Seven garden areas for the interment of cremated remains are located adjacent to the creek. The ashes of some 235 persons are buried there.

On the Midland Highway

General map of cemetery

Snippets of cemetery history

Anne Beggs-Sunter, Buninyong & District Historical Society

The majority of the first white settlers of this district were of Scottish descent. This can be seen by the numbers buried in the large Presbyterian section which runs along the length of East Terrace.

In the original survey, areas also had been allocated to three other denominations - Episcopalian (Anglican), Catholic and Wesleyan religions. Other areas for Baptist, Chinese and 'Other' burials were added.

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The discovery of rich gold leads in the mid-1850s saw large numbers of diggers and their families, most from overseas countries, coming to Buninyong and surrounding districts.

Many deaths came about from mining accidents or contagious diseases. An example of men killed in mining accidents can be seen at Presbyterian 12 in the map on page 6.

Graves (such as Episcopalian 518 map 25, in which eight infant children from the one family are buried) also bear testimony to the large numbers of still-born, infant and young children buried here, and to the hardships suffered by the many women who died in childbirth or from disease.

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Much of the planting in the cemetery occurred in the 1873-74 period when the local nurseryman **Francis Moss** (map 35) donated many plants to the cemetery. Other plants were donated by **Mr Innes**, **Mr Clark** and **Mr Biddle**.

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A report in the *Buninyong Telegraph* of 22 October 1873 gave great praise to the sexton of that time, a **Mr Bull**. There were well-maintained flower beds, shrubs and trees along the main east-west roadway (now North Terrace). Elms and willows had been planted alternatively along the banks of the creek.

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From 1919 to 1950 the sexton was **Mr McPherson** who grew daffodils for sale and display in the then empty western section. Evidence of their planting can still be seen in Spring with patches of colourful flowers appearing in many areas.

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Just a few metres along the entrance driveway (on the right hand side), are two small markers. The first records the work of **Joseph Henry Parkinson** who was the sexton for 20 years until 1968 (although he is buried elsewhere). The second is the memorial stone and epitaph of **N E Mackiewicz-Taygin**, a composer and writer who rests in this shady treed setting.

The new burial ground of Chinese miners, mostly buried in the late 1800s

With sizeable numbers of Chinese miners and market gardeners coming to the Buninyong goldfields, a small section of the cemetery (along North Terrace) was allocated for Chinese burials.

Most had walked some 450km from the seaport of Robe in South Australia to reach the local goldfields.

Many Chinese disembarked at Robe to avoid the heavy entry tax set by the Victorian Government.

Until 2023 most Chinese graves were unmarked – just being in an untended grassy section of the cemetery. In 2023 a major project, supported by community groups, was undertaken, and now all 24 graves are named, the area landscaped, and is 'guarded' by two dragons sitting under a large oriental arch. Interpretative signage is nearby.

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Across the Midland Highway, looking north from the cemetery, are some small hills near/on which gold was first discovered by **Thomas Hiscock** in 1851 and which sparked the gold rushes to this area and to Ballarat. Hiscock is buried in Episcopalian 743 26. It was also the site of the very large Imperial Gold Mine which gives its name to one of the cemetery's internal roads.

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While Thomas Hiscock, a blacksmith, was the first to discover gold just across the Midland Highway from here, perhaps the most famous local mine-owner was **Henry Desoza**, whose mine was on Scotchman's Lead Road just to the east of the cemetery. Desoza was a generous philanthropist, and was named Buninyong's *Gold King* in 1885. The large park in central Buninyong carries his name. His grave can be found at 30 on the map.

Guide to notable graves

Scattered through the memorial sections of this cemetery are many graves of historical or community interest. A recent project involved placing small green signs (see p 9) adjacent to 50 graves. These signs give interesting details of the person or persons buried there.

The blue numbers on the map (opposite) show the approximate location of these graves, and enable an easy stroll from grave to grave.

PRESBYTERIAN

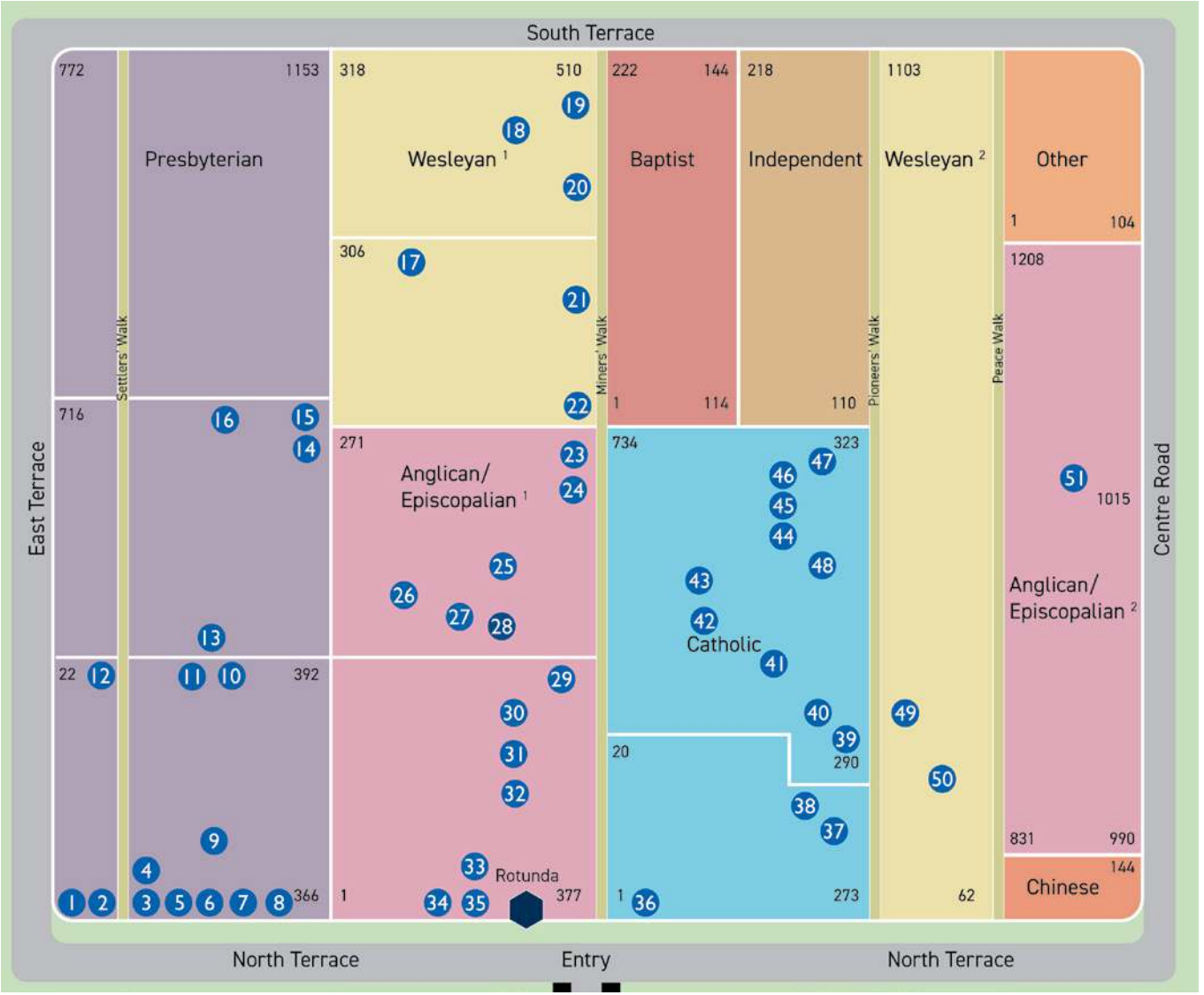
1. P2 **Robert Gillespie**. Manager Boninyong Station, National Bank
2. P47 **Rev Thomas Hastie**. Early Minister and educator
3. P49 **Scott Family**. Pioneer settlers (1837) and pastoralists
4. P103 **John Kelsall**. Wool broker. Presbyterian Church Elder
5. P161 **Annie Middlemist**. Teacher and local identity
6. P364 **Esther Biddle**. Wife of Methodist preacher, businessman
7. P366 **Robert Harvey**. Surveyor. Long-term Town Clerk
8. P261 **Dr John Hallett**. GP in the 1870s. Lived in Camilla Cottage
9. P197 **Levi Butcher**. Cab driver. Owner of refreshment rooms
10. P231 **Robert Bell**. Pastoralist. Killed by lightning 1881
11. P189 **Dr Frank Longden**. Long-term village doctor from 1859
12. P78 **Walter Parlane & Peter McNee**. Killed in mining accident
13. P537 **George Innes**. 'King' of the wood splitters
14. P413 **Elizabeth Gullan**. First recorded burial here. 1852
15. P411 **Hartley Family**. Early burials. Mother and five children
16. P568 **'Paddy' Jones**. Village baker and identity

WESLEYAN

17. W205 **Martha Crombie**. Hardies Hill farmer. Leading Methodist
18. W475 **William Whykes**. Township butcher and local identity
19. W514 **Gullock children**. Six died of disease very young
20. W15 **Warren Speak**. Grocer. Twice Mayor of Buninyong
21. W49 **Geddie Pearse**. First Principal, Buninyong State School
22. W38 **Albert Peyroux**. Tanner. Died of typhoid fever aged 35

EPISCOPALIAN

23. E406 **Rev Garrett Russell**. First Anglican minister at Holy Trinity
24. E392 **Dr Richard Power**. First doctor in inland Victoria
25. E518 **Sykes children**. Grave of eight, who died very young
26. E743 **Thomas Hiscock**. First discoverer of gold, 1851
27. E696 **George Hale**. Long-term Secretary of Buninyong Shire
28. E581 **Richard Rennie**. Builder of major township buildings
29. E828 **Thomas Sheppard**. Brewery owner
30. E823 **Henry Desoza**. Mine owner. 'Gold King'. Philanthropist
31. E261 **Charles Seal**. Stockbroker, mining agent
32. E258 **Peter Hedrick**. Storekeeper. First Mayor of Buninyong
33. E250 **George Eason**. Long-term Scotsburn, Buninyong family
34. E179 **Eliza & Enoch Mayo**. Storekeepers, publicans at Yendon
35. E244 **Francis Moss**. Nurseryman. Owner of *Mossmont*



CATHOLIC

36. C1 **John Higgins**. Draper, Buninyong and Ballarat
37. C220 **John Egspuler**. Swiss migrants. Gum Tree Flat Hotel and store
38. C183 **Mary Hannah**. Mother of 15 children. Local sporting family
39. C290 **William Kenworthy**. 12yo. Killed in Lal Lal Falls accident
40. C449 **Bridget & William Hanley**. Pioneer mining family, Hiscocks
41. C527 **Thomas O'Loughlin**. Early settlers, farmers at Durham Lead
42. C625 **Julia & Mary Egan**. Loved identities, Little Hard Hills Hotel
43. C661 **Derick Leather**. RAF/Army veteran. Community leader
44. C602 **William Thorpe**. Schoolteacher, local historian
45. C604 **John Mildren OAM (1932-2024).** Fed'l MP for Ballarat 1980-1990
46. C606 **John (Jock) McCarty**. Pioneer Gum Tree family. Cemetery Trustee
47. C548 **Edmund O'Loughlin**. Major contributor to local community life
48. C474 **Collas Family**. Miners, Gum Tree. Five young children in grave

WESLEYAN 2

49. W840 **Watkins Family**. Musicians, singers, Wesley Church. 13 children
50. W702 **John Ogilvie**. Botanic Gardens curator. Mayor

EPISCOPALIAN 2

51. E1117 **Oliver & William Rayner**. Drowned in lake in Botanic Gardens

Buninyong Cemetery today

At the time of publication with some 60-70 burials each year, predominantly in its Lawn section, the Buninyong Cemetery is fast filling up its available capacity. Efforts to acquire additional land are still being made. The cemetery has three principal and discrete sections. In each, burials have a perpetual tenure.

THE MEMORIAL SECTION

This area was the originally-surveyed part of the cemetery where for about 120 years almost all burials took place. It is bounded by North, East and South Terraces and Centre Road. There are 4777 'denominational' plots with about 1350 still vacant. There is also a small Chinese section of 44 plots.

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THE LAWN SECTION

At the western side of the cemetery there are two main Lawn areas divided by Imperial Road (named after the large Imperial Gold Mine which was on the hillock opposite the main gate). The first section, opened in 1970, has 1115 plots, is now full.

The newer Lawn area, east of Imperial Road, has 570 plots with some 360 currently available for future burials. The Lawn area presently has had some 1900 burials and is now the preferred area for most burials.

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THE MEMORIAL ASH GARDEN

Situated along the creek which meanders through the lower area of the cemetery near the main entrance are seven garden beds divided into plots where ashes of persons who have been cremated are interred. There are 280 plots with some 75 available.

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THE DELL OF MEMORIES

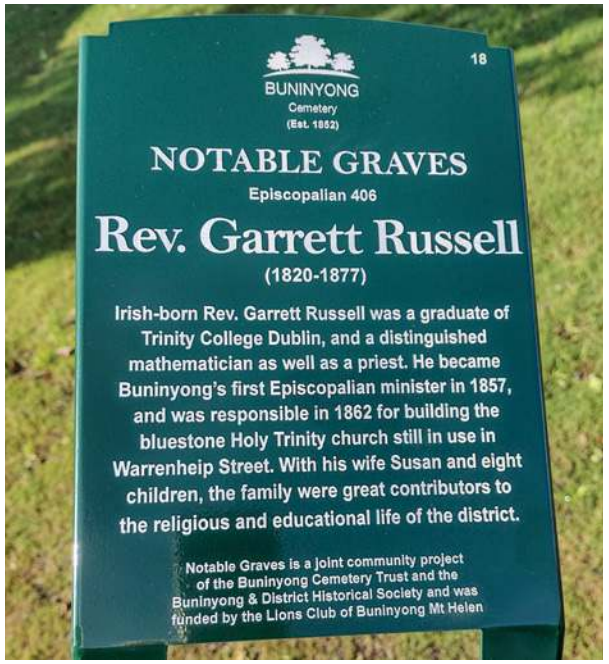
This secluded and peaceful area with its trees and rockpools was developed in 2018 following requests from local persons, with loved ones buried or whose ashes were spread elsewhere, wanting a place to come to grieve or reflect. Plaques are placed on large 'memorial' rocks there

Cemetery records and website

The Buninyong Cemetery's website, to be found at *buninyongcemetery.com.au*, contains detailed information about many aspects of the cemetery, its history, operational rules and policies, costs of various services, and now the location and records of people buried there.

A major recent project has put into an accessible computer listing, the burial records of more than 7300 persons buried at the Buninyong Cemetery since 1852. These have been drawn from old record books, ledgers, out-dated computer files, and other paper records.

To access the records of any individual thought to be buried at the Buninyong Cemetery follow these steps



Green signs such as this one are placed near the 50 'notable' graves

1. Go to the cemetery website – *www.buninyongcemetery.com.au*
2. Under the **History** tab, select **Cemetery Records**, and then follow the 'Click **HERE**' link.
3. In the box at top right, key in the **surname of the person of interest**. Then press **SEARCH**. All burials with that surname will be shown, together with plot details and (usually) other information such as dates of birth, death and burial.
4. To the right of this information is a small '**View**' button which will show an aerial image of the approximate location of the grave, and for some, a photograph.

While great care has been taken in the compilation of these records, should research by an individual show any inaccuracies, please advise the Cemetery Trust (buninyongcemetery@gmail.com) of this.

Two helpful publications – an eight-page *General Information Booklet* and a detailed *Burial Booklet* – also are to be found on the web-site.

Questions and answers

How do I find out what sites are vacant or available and how do I purchase one?

The Secretary of the Trust holds and maintains 'plot' books in which details of every burial and available sites can be found. Most persons wish to see a possible site's location within the cemetery, and so a meeting will be arranged there.

To obtain/reserve a site, full payment for a Right of Interment must be made. This right enables the burial of one or two persons in that site.

What does it cost to be buried at Buninyong?

In 2026 the costs of a gravesite in the various sections were – Lawn $1240, Memorial $975, and Ash Gardens $625.

At the time of any burial, in addition to fees charged by the Funeral Director and the grave digger there is a Burial Administration Fee currently $640 in the Lawn or Memorial sections, and $215 in the Ash Gardens.

These fees are indexed by a Government-determined CPI amount in July each year.

Who is responsible for the maintenance of a gravesite?

In the Lawn, Ash Garden, and Dell of Memories sections, the Trust is responsible for the upkeep of gravesites and surrounds. In the 'memorial' (denominational) section, families or the holders of the Right of Interment are responsible for the upkeep, safety and repair of grave-sites, headstones and monuments.

For how long do burial rights for a grave site continue?

In some cemeteries, rights only continue for 25 years or some other specified period. At this cemetery rights are for perpetuity.

How is the cemetery administered and funded?

The Cemetery Trust comprised of voluntary, honorary community members is appointed for five-year terms by the Minister for Health.

The Trust is a not-for-profit organisation, without Government funding. Its operations are funded through the 'sale' of gravesites and other charges associated with burials. A listing of present Trust members can be found on the website.

The avenue of 50 ornamental pear trees honours the long Trust service of Jock McCarty and Dawn Whykes

Buninyong Cemetery Trust

The Trust has developed a comprehensive website – www.buninyongcemetery.com.au. Included there are details of history, cemetery rules and policies, maps, application forms, details of headstones, selected cemetery records, and full contact details. A small booklet – *Burial at the Buninyong Cemetery* - is available on-line.

As all cemetery administrative duties are carried out by volunteers, immediate contact may not always be possible. However, messages left on email or phone are responded to within a short time.

Grounds maintenance is carried out by a crew of four community volunteers who work at the Cemetery each Monday.

Phone : 0415 929 571
Email: buninyongcemetery@gmail.com
Website: www.buninyongcemetery.com.au

Buninyong & District Historical Society

The Buninyong & District Historical Society (BDHS) has an enviable record of undertaking research about local historical events, organisations, and people, and in holding and preserving important local records and documents.

The BDHS has played an important role in providing much of the information about the persons whose gravesites have green *Notable Grave* signage adjacent.

The group and its records (including old Cemetery volumes) and memorabilia are based in the well-preserved Old Court House (1884), a wing of the historic Buninyong Town Hall complex in Learmonth Street, Buninyong. BDHS members are present at the Old Court House on the third Saturday of each month between 9.30am and 1.30pm

Phone : 0439 115 255
website: http://home.vicnet.net.au/-buninhis/

Buninyong Old Library Trust

Members of this group and other volunteers are present at the Old Library (1855) building located at 408 Warrenheip Street (opposite the Post-Office) on Tuesdays to Sundays between about 11.00am and 2.00pm. It is, in essence, the Buninyong Information Centre, and also has many local historical records, photographs, visitor guides, articles, books, newspaper cuttings and other memorabilia. Many books, postcards and pamphlets on Buninyong are available for sale.

Phone: (03) 5341 8211
Website: buninyong.vic.au

BUNINYONG
Cemetery

Contact Details

The Secretary
Buninyong Cemetery Trust
PO Box 528, BUNINYONG VIC 3357

p: 0415 929 571
e: buninyongcemetery@gmail.com
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The Notable Graves project detailed on pages 6-7 of this booklet was a co-operative project of the Buninyong Cemetery Trust and The Buninyong & District Historical Society. A major funding grant to support the project came from the Buninyong Mount Helen Lions Club.

Community Bank
Buninyong
Bendigo Bank

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