

# HERITAGE PLACE

**NAME OF PLACE:** DUNKELD CEMETERY (OLD)

**ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE:** Old Cemetery Lane DUNKELD

**STUDY NUMBER:** 370

**HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

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**PRECINCT:** outside

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** Southern Grampians Shire

**PARISH:** PARISH OF DUNKELD

**ACCESS DESCRIPTION:**

CFA 433 D; VicRoads 73 G4; located on the south side of Old Cemetery Road about 1.0km east of its intersection with the Dunkeld-Blackwood Road, about six kilometers south east of the township of Dunkeld.

**SIGNIFICANCE RATING:** Local



Dunkeld Cemetery (Old), Old Cemetery Road

**Image Date:** 9/12/02

**EXTENT OF LISTING:**

To the extent of: 1. All the surviving graves, monuments, fences, etc., plantings and the whole of the cemetery reserve.

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## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Dunkeld Cemetery is located on a stony rise (granite) located about six kilometers south east of the township of Dunkeld, on the South Side of Old Cemetery Lane. The site gradually slopes from its summit to the North, South and West to land around it. The whole of the site is overgrown with long grass and thistles, although paths are regularly slashed through for access.

A description from 1900 states that roads dividing denominations were carved out of soil and rock, and culverts were in place where they intersected. There is little evidence of these, and there have never been any paths located between the graves, due to the nature of the site. The graves are arranged in a typically denominational fashion, although they are clustered together in groups, or unevenly spaced out. This arrangement is a result of the difficulty in sinking graves on the site in the nineteenth century, resulting in the 'easiest' places having as many graves as possible dug in a limited area where digging was possible.

There are no structures on the site, although a number of graves have small memorial plantings on them. Many of the graves have large obelisks and cast iron fences surrounding them.

A post and rail fence once formed a boundary fence on the east, west and southern sides of the cemetery, and the north boundary was a wooden picket fence. Little evidence of the original fencing survives.

## HISTORY:

The passing of the English Metropolitan Interments Act granted the Board of Health in London to provide burial grounds. This seems to have influenced legislation in the Australian colonies. Cemeteries were usually developed in association with particular churches or as a result of public meetings of concerned citizens. "In 1854, an 'Act for the Establishment and Management of Cemeteries in the Colony of Victoria' was passed by the Victorian Government forming the basis of cemetery management as we know it today. The Government had the power to appoint and remove trustees and lend or pay money for the establishment of cemeteries. The trustees were charged with the responsibilities to construct structures and avenues; impose rules and regulations to manage and protect the cemeteries; allow ministers of religion free access and religious denominations to build mortuary chapels; have the right to veto and remove inappropriate vaults and monuments; and to keep accounts and statements." [Sagazio, 'Our Heritage', p. 13] The passing of the 'Municipal Institutions Establishment Act' in 1854 became the basis of Victoria's local government. Local councils were given control over amenities including roads, bridges, streets, sanitation and public health. The 'Public Health Act' was also passed in 1854 and it was envisaged that local councils would also have the responsibility for management of public cemeteries. "Under the provisions of the Public Health Act 1889 the Minister for Health and the Department of Public Health became responsible for the management of cemeteries and the responsibility has remained within the Health portfolio since that time." [Sagazio, 'Our Heritage', p. 15]

Most small suburban and country cemeteries were simple in layout with graves in straight lines in either a grid or a design of winding paths. The latter was an influence from English cemetery design, particularly from John Claudius Loudon, and to a lesser extent American cemetery design, from such landscape garden designers as Calvert and Vaux. Plantings were typically those with a funereal iconography such as Cupressus funebris, C. sempervirens, various Pinus species, Laurels, Yews and Junipers. Their common quality was their evergreen and sombre foliage. In special cases trees, shrubs or minor plants were planted with specific association for the deceased. Cemeteries were subdivided into sections according to the major Christian denominations. In rare cases there were also sections for non-Christians, such as the Jews.

The first burial ground in Dunkeld was an informal site, where Mr. James Templeton of the Woolpack Inn was buried (aged 28) after being accidentally shot in January, 1854 (Back to Dunkeld Committee). His brother, Andrew's infant son was also buried there in 1850 (ibid.).

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The Old Dunkeld Cemetery was temporarily gazetted 24th September, 1866, and made a permanent gazette 02 October, 1866 (Gordon, D, File Note), although the first burial for which a tombstone survives was in 1854, Daniel Gunn, who died 31/05/1854, aged 17 years. Many important early families from Dunkeld and the surrounding area have been buried in the Old Dunkeld Cemetery including the Ross family of Mount Sturgeon, the Gunn, McArthur, Mereweather, Fry, Dickie, Templeton and Howell families.

The Board of Public Health reported the old Cemetery site at Dunkeld to be "unsuitable for the purposes owing to the stony nature of the ground, and recommend[ed] that a new site be obtained as soon as possible." (Letter, dated 24 April, 1900 to Minister of Lands, Lands & Survey Department, Melbourne from Shire Secretary, C. Dufton, Shire of Mount Rouse).

The cemetery had been located on a granite filled stony rise, and as a result, from the earliest burials there was difficulty in digging graves to a suitable depth. A letter from Mr. Germain in 1899 complains that "It is almost impossible to dig a grave deeper than four feet ....coffins are not more than 18 inches below the surface" (File Note 11/12/1899).

From correspondence between the Department of Land and Works (or Survey) and various interested parties, it appears that the cemetery was never well cared for. Various descriptions note that the cemetery is in an unkempt state, overgrown with thistles and long grass, or covered with weeds. When questioned, the Cemetery Trustees stated that they had been unable to contract anyone to undertake the work, although they had continually advertised by tender.

As a result of complaints, an inspection was undertaken by T. E. Dunkley in 1900 to determine the condition and suitability of the site to continue as a burial ground. The report found that the site was not suitable for a burial ground as the granite filled earth made digging below four feet impossible without blasting through stone, and the porous soil meant that in "winter time when a grave is dug it is said to soon fill up with water, and at times rocks have to be placed on top of a coffin to keep them from floating up until the grave is filled in" (Dunkley, 1900). He also described the condition of the cemetery at that time as "one of careless neglect and shows a want of even ordinary care in those responsible for its good keeping" (ibid.).

Despite this report, burials had to continue in the old cemetery until a new site could be found. The Shire of Mount Rouse wrote to the Department of Lands and Survey in April of 1900 requesting that the Crown sell land reserved (but no longer used) as a quarry (10 acres on allotment 52 B 2, in Parish of Dunkeld), for the purpose of purchasing privately owned land for a cemetery reserve. The Shire of Mount Rouse stated their reason for this request was that there was no suitable available Crown Land in the vicinity of Dunkeld.

The last burial in old cemetery was Elizabeth Howell, who died 14/03/1904 aged 71 years, who was buried in March 1904.

The first burial in the new Dunkeld Cemetery was in 1905.

## **THEMATIC CONTEXT:**

Theme 9: Marking the phases of life

9.7 Dying

9.7.1 Dealing with human remains

9.7.3 Remembering the dead

## **CONDITION:**

The cemetery is in fair condition. Many of the tombstones are in poor condition, and many are in danger of falling over.

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## INTEGRITY:

Good degree of integrity

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The Dunkeld Old Cemetery is a ten acre allotment set on an elevated granite outcrop, some six kilometers south east of the township of Dunkeld. The cemetery looks towards the Grampians, and was used from 1854 to 1904, until condemned by the Public Health Board as it was almost impossible to dig graves deeper than four feet. The cemetery has a range of burials, both large and small memorials, with very limited plantings on a few graves. The cemetery was replaced by the Dunkeld New Cemetery, located north of the township of Dunkeld in 1905. The first burial was in 1854, although the cemetery gazette date was not until 1866. The Cemetery is overgrown, although some mowing is carried out on a regular basis, and many of the tombstones are unstable. The cemetery retains a high degree of integrity.

How is it significant?

The Dunkeld Old Cemetery is of historical, social and architectural significance to the district of Dunkeld and the Southern Grampians Shire.

What is significant?

The Dunkeld Old Cemetery is of historical significance as an enduring record of those who have lived and died in the community, as a reflection of passing phases, ways of life and death, particular events, and as documentary evidence. It is of social significance for reflecting the customs and tastes of the community, for reflecting different religious values, and for reflecting different economic and social status. It is also important as a place of passive recreation. The cemetery is of further historical significance as the first cemetery which served the community, replaced in 1905 due to the unsuitability of the site. The Dunkeld Old Cemetery is of architectural significance for its range of tombstones, memorials and iconography reflecting the aesthetics of different periods and groups within the community. It is also of interest for its overall design and position within the broader landscape.

## COMPARISON:

~~130 Balmoral Cemetery, Cemetery Road, Balmoral~~  
135 Coleraine Cemetery, Lower Hilgay Road, Coleraine  
180 Tarrayoukyan Cemetery, Tarrayoukyan Rd, Tarrayoukyan  
041 Glenthompson Cemetery, Scott Street, Glenthompson  
325 Old Cemetery, Scott Street (extension), Cavendish,  
113 Boram Boram Cemetery, Boram Boram Lane, Penshurst  
261 Byaduk Cemetery, Cemetery Road, Byaduk  
291 New Hamilton Lawn Cemetery, Henty Highway, Hamilton

**ASSESSED BY:** tfh, aen, mgt

**ASSESSMENT DATE:**

12-Aug-02

## EXISTING LISTINGS:

## HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Include in VHR  Include in RNE  Include in Local Planning Scheme

No Recommendations for Inclusions

## REFERENCES:

Author	Title	Year	Page
Celestina Sagazio, ed.	Cemeteries, Our Heritage	1992	13 & 15

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David Gordon	File Notes - Dunkeld Cemetery	n.d
David Gordon	Personal Communication 09/12/2002	2002
Department of Lands and Survey	File Note - Dunkeld Cemetery, Mount Rouse Shire	1899
John Bond	Letter to Assistant Commissioner of Lands and Survey, September 13, 1866	1866
Office of Lands and Survey	File Note - Dunkeld Cemetery, Mount Rouse Shire 24/09/1866	1866
T. E Dunkley	Report of Inspection undertaken to ascertain condition of Cemetery and suitability of site	1900