



DOUGLAS SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.
25 Wharf Street Port Douglas (next to the Police Station)

Some Stories of People in the Port Douglas Pioneer Cemetery (ABRIDGED)

Note: Marked Grave Numbers are given as Cemetery Section and Number (from the north end of the Section) according to the plan on the location page 4.

Section A Row 1 / 7

William Thomson born approx. 1820 died 22 Oct 1886 aged 66 years

"Sacred to the memory of my generous and beloved brother William Thomson who met his death by cruel and treacherous murder on the 22nd day of October 1886 aged 66 years This stone is erected by his much esteemed and beloved brother Thomas Thomson God wanted him in heaven In company with the blessed His abode is now with angels Where the weary are at rest Our father in heaven Thy will be done Thy ways are inscrutable"

Telegraph, Monday 13 June 1887

EXECUTION OF ELLEN THOMPSON[sic] – The execution of a woman always attracts, in British communities a painful attention. That of Ellen Thompson[sic], who was hanged at South Brisbane gaol this morning, has received special notice because it is the first occasion of hanging a woman in Queensland.

...It is our duty to point out that if Ellen Thompson[sic] is the first woman to suffer the extreme penalty of the law in Queensland, she is the first deemed guilty enough to suffer it.

...If the history of Ellen Thompson's[sic] case could be known it might appear that the man Harrison, her accomplice, was the worse of the two. She had said that "if old Bill were out of the way his property would be mine."

...But Harrison certainly thought that "if old Bill were out of the way, both old woman and the money would be mine.' He, at all events, fired the fatal shots. He now says it was in self-defence.

The Double Execution 13 June, 2016 by the Queensland State Archives website: <https://blogs.archives.qld.gov.au/2016/06/13/the-double-execution/>

"Her version of the tragedy was briefly that her husband and Harrison had been quarrelling, when she, with the intention of making peace between them, in a jocular spirit remarked to Harrison that if he did not shut up, the old man, meaning Thompson[sic], would shoot him. Harrison immediately took up the revolver, saying "Will he? Well, I will have first shot," at the same time firing."

Section B Row 5 / 1

FRESHNEY, George born approx. 1857 died 22 Jun 1878 aged 21 years

"In memory of George Freshney died June 22nd 1878 aged 21 years"

DSHS Bulletin 37 – "A Visit To 'God's Acre' Townsville Daily Bulletin, 20 September 1938

The earliest record of interment appears to be that of George Freshney, died at the age of 21 on July 22, 1878

Brisbane Courier, Wednesday 10 March 1880 [Re: George's father, Charles Freshney]

On the Mossman, there is about 2,000,000 feet [in superfeet of red cedar this is equivalent to 25 logs at 10m. long and 1m. diameter average] belonging to Messrs Freshney and Forsythe

Section E Row 1 / 1

ISLEY, Sarah Jane born approx. 1842 died 27 Jul 1881 aged 39 years

"In memory of Sarah Jane wife of John B Isley Insp. Police who died July 27th 1881 aged 39 years"

DSHS Bulletin Number 42 – "John Bacey Isley (1837-1916) – A Short Biography" by John Walters

A personal tragedy occurred on 27th July 1881, when his wife, Sarah Jane Isley died in Port Douglas. Her grave and a memorial are located in the Port Douglas cemetery. With his wife's death, John Isley now had to attend to his one surviving son's upbringing and it was a responsibility that brought an early problem. The three year-old boy, Alfred Frank Isley; was unsettled by the nature of his mother's death and he refused to reside in the house where the death had occurred. Inspector John Bacey Isley applied for alternative accommodation, but his request was denied. History does not tell us how the problem was solved. Inspector John Bacey Isley remained at Port Douglas until 1886.

Morning Bulletin, Thursday 15 June 1882

PORT DOUGLAS. The Chronicle of the 10th writes: - Mr Inspector Isley arrived here on Thursday afternoon in charge of the gold escort from the Etheridge and Hodgkinson Goldfields. The cavalcade consisted of eight European Troopers and an equal number of Native Policemen with eleven packhorses, bringing 12,876 ounces of gold, the heaviest brought down for some time back.

DSHS Bulletin Number 39 – "Native Police activity in the Port Douglas District" by Dr Jonathan Richards

In June 1878, Senior Constable Michael Dillon reported to Isley saying he went in pursuit of miner Christy Palmerston, who was wanted for felony. Dillon said a shanty owner named Bob Lewis (who lived on Rifle Creek) kept Palmerston in provisions if he 'kept the blacks away'. Lewis bought gold from Palmerston, which he apparently found ten miles away in the ranges. The method by which Palmerston 'kept the blacks away', and the location of his gold mine 'in the ranges', can only be speculated upon, but the location is close to the route of the Hodgkinson-Port Douglas Road.

Section E Row 1 / 4 & 5

BUCHANAN, William Henry born approx. 1837 died 3 Sep 1883 aged 46 years

"In memoriam this headstone is erected by the sorrowing widow and six children of the late William Henry Buchanan who departed this life 3rd September 1883 aged 46 years" "He was a good and faithful husband and father The spirits of the just mingle together"

BUCHANAN, Annie died 5-7-1951

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away"

GIBSON, John died 27 Jul 1885

GIBSON, Jane born approx . 1822 died 22 Apr 1910 aged 88 years

ROBERTSON, William died 5 Nov 1916

ROBERTSON, Jane 'Cis' born approx . 1875 died 28 Oct 1947 aged 72 years

"In loving memory of our great grandparents John Gibson died 27th July 1885 Jane Gibson died 22nd April 1910 our dear father and mother. William Robertson died 5th November 1916 Jane 'Cis' Robertson died 28th October 1947 "Gone but not forgotten"

DSHS Bulletin Number 10 – “Some Notes on Hotels at Port Douglas and the Court House Hotel” by Noel Weare

William Henry Buchanan who had been mining for gold at Ravenswood and Charters Towers successfully applied for a retail spirit license, the first twenty-one of which were issued for Port Douglas in June/July 1878. His father-in-law John Gibson built “Buchanan’s Family Hotel” on the strategic corner lot. The hotel was a substantial timber building extending along the main street, with the public bar door prominent at the Macrossan & Wharf street corner. With the erection of the Port Douglas Court House nearby in 1879 the hotel’s name was changed to “Buchanan’s Court House Hotel”. William Buchanan selected 400 acres of land on the banks of the Mossman River, which he named “Bonnie Doon”. Two years later, aged 46, he died leaving his widow Annie to manage the various business interests, and six children! Bonnie Doon” had been transferred to Annie on Buchanan’s death, and it was her cane which was the first ever to be crushed at the newly completed Mossman Central Mill on the 23rd of August 1897.

Queensland Figaro, Saturday 25 August 1883

W.H. Buchanan, late of the Courthouse Hotel, Port Douglas, has died of typhoid fever, which he caught recently while superintending the work of his farm on Mossman River. Port Douglas has turned out en masse to his funeral, which was a Masonic one. Buchanan was well-known in the early days of Charters Towers and Ravenswood. He was proprietor of the first crushing mill in the Towers.

“The McLean History” by Lesley Clarke

John Gibson was born at Eaglesham, near Paisley in Scotland in 1830 where his parents were married in 1830. Jane was born in 1829, possibly at Paisley but there are no records. John was most likely a woollen dyer. They had children in Scotland, Anne (Annie Buchanan later Rose)

Section E Row 2 / 7 & 8

O’BRIEN, Denis born approx. 1838 died 13 Nov 1905 aged 67 years

FYNN, Nicholas Joseph born approx. 1867 died 21 Nov 1905 aged 38 years

“In loving memory of Denis O’Brien died 13th Nov 1905 aged 67 years Also Nicholas Joseph Fynn died 21st Nov 1905 aged 38 years Not gone from memory, not gone from love But gone to a better home above R.I.P.”

FYNN, Bridget born approx. 1881 died 21 Sep 1969 aged 88 years

“In loving memory of Bridget Fynn who departed this life 21st September 1969 R.I.P.”

Evening Telegraph, Wednesday 22 November 1905

Tramway Accident. DEATH AT PORT DOUGLAS. Port Douglas, Wednesday. The axle of a goods wagon in the afternoon tram from Port Douglas to Mossman broke neat Colenso. The wagon fell forward, seriously injuring Nicholas Flynn, the clerk of the Port Douglas Shire Council, who was sitting on the platform of the passenger carriage. He was taken to the hospital, where he died.

North Queensland Register, Monday 26 May 1902

MINING NOTES Mr. Flynn[sic] having succeeded in forming Mt. Spurgeon tin mines into a syndicate of £1000 (says the “Port Douglas Gazette”) ...a general meeting of shareholders was held at his office on Wednesday last – Messrs. J. Reynolds, A. Gibbs, R. A. Donnelly, J. E. Muntz and J. Forsyth, were appointed as directors, with Mr. Nicholas Fynn as secretary. The object of the syndicate is to work the Mrs. M. Reynolds tin claim at Mount Spurgeon, on which a tunnel 100ft in length has been driven.

Morning Post, Friday 17 November 1905

Mr. Denis O’Brien, a respected resident of this district for the last 24 years, died at his home, Finlavaile[sic], Mossman, on Tuesday afternoon, aged 64. The funeral moved from Mossman to the Port Douglas cemetery by special train, and was very largely attended. The deceased was the father of eight grown-up children, and several of his daughters are married to leading citizens.

Section B Row 3 / 2

McLEAN, Robert born approx. 1853 died 5 Jan 1911 aged 58 years

McLEAN, Clementina McIntyre born approx. 1865 died 27 Feb 1911 aged 46 years

McLEAN, John Alexander born Sep 1885 died 16 Mar 1914 aged 28 years and 6 months

“In loving memory of our dear father, mother and brother Robert McLean died 5th January 1911, aged 58 years Clementina McIntyre McLean wife of the above died 27th February 1911, aged 46 years John Alexander McLean son of the above died 16th March 1914, aged 29 years”

DSHS Bulletin 37 – “A Visit To ‘God’s Acre” Townsville Daily Bulletin, 20 September 1938

Robert McLean, who for many years conducted the Caledonian Hotel in Port Douglas, died on January 5, 1911, at the age of 58, and was followed by his wife seven weeks later. Their son, John Alexander McLean, Shire Clerk, breathed his last on March 16, 1914, and is at rest near his parents.

“The McLean History” by Lesley Clarke

...Cairns Post, Friday 6 Jan 1911 – “DEATH OF ROBERT MCLEAN. PORT DOUGLAS, Thursday. Robert McLean, an old and highly respected Northern pioneer resident, proprietor of the Caledonian Hotel, Port Douglas, died at 2 o’clock this afternoon. The deceased had been in a very weak state of health for some months and gradually sank, passing away peacefully as stated. Robert McLean, or “Bob” as he was more popularly known, had been a resident of the district in which he died about 30 years. He kept the first hotel opened in Mossman, and was always admired for his straightforwardness and respected for his integrity. He was associated with most of the early prospectors and timber getters in the good old days of the North.

...Cairns Post “Mrs Clementine McLean, proprietress of the Caledonian Hotel, Port Douglas, died this morning about 7 o’clock from pleurisy. Her husband, Robert McLean, only died on January 5th. Both are buried in the Port Douglas Pioneers Cemetery along with John Alexander, John and Jane Gibson and William Henry and Annie Buchanan (Gibson).

Section E Row 5 / 3

CARTER, John James Carter (Jackie) born 1925 died 8 Aug 1928 aged 3 years and 8 months

“In loving memory of John James (Jackie) Carter, passed away 8th August 1928, aged 3 years 8 months. Young son of Joseph and Mary Carter, Low Island lightkeepers. Lovingly remembered by family, Frank, Irene, Joan, Betty, Ruth, Bill and Pat”

In Memory of John James (Jackie) Carter by Bill & Frank Carter

We are today [1 January 2014] dedicating and placing a headstone on the site designated by the Council as the gravesite of our brother, Jackie. Mum and Dad were lightkeepers on Low Isles lighthouse, when in August 1928 Jackie became ill and was taken to Port Douglas hospital, where he died on 8th August. His grave was marked by a mound of coral. Mum and Dad were not able to get back to the site until the 1960’s, though they had made enquiries, only to be told that there was no record of the site. Visits by myself and other family over the years, and efforts made to try and locate the coral mound from old photographs of headstones which may have shown it, proved fruitless. Shortly after the Historical Society located it. So after about 70 years of not knowing, we are now able to place this headstone as a permanent memorial.

Section B Row 1 / 3 & 4

TUNNIE, Janet born Feb 1884 died 7 Aug 1889 aged 5 years and 6 months

TUNNIE, Margaret born approx. 1839 died 20 Feb 1911 aged 72 years

"Sacred to the memory of Janet Tunnie who died August 7th 1889 aged 5 1/2 years Sweet was her little stay She came, but as a guest She tasted life and fled away To her eternal rest. Also Margaret beloved wife of R.P. Tunnie died 20th February 1911 aged 72 years"

TUNNIE, Robert Punton born approx. 1843 died 4 Jul 1918 aged 75 years

TUNNIE, Charles Edwin born approx. 1880 died 16 Jun 1946 aged 66 years

"In loving memory of Margaret Tunnie Also Robert Punton Tunnie died 4th July 1918 aged 75 years Erected by their loving sons & daughters. Also Charles Edwin Tunnie died 16th June 1946 aged 66 years"

DSHS Bulletin 37 – "A Visit To 'God's Acre'" Townsville Daily Bulletin, 20 September 1938

Robert Punton Tunnie, who died on July 4, 1918, at the age of 75 years was for a long term the Port Douglas manager of Messrs. Jack and Newell. He took an active part in the public life of the district as a member of the Douglas Shire Council and the directorate of the Mossman Mill. He migrated from the New England district in New South Wales, to Stanthorpe, and later to Port Douglas. He was predeceased by his wife on February 20, 1911

"Port of Promise" by Glenville Pike

R.P. Tunnie was a noticeable figure in white ducks, with a grey beard and umbrella which he always carried even in fine weather, as he walked from his home on the corner of Macrossan and Davidson Streets to the shop and wharf three times a day and back again. [G.P. indicates that the "shop" refers to the store-wharf when Jack & Newell succeeded Walsh & Co. as agents for the AUSN Company and the Howard Smith line]

DSHS Bulletin Number 31 – "Port Douglas of Yesteryear Era of early ships trading to and from the port" by Joe Bettany

The 'R. P. Tunnie' was the name of the ship or parts of the ship that used to be on the seaward side of the old Sugar Wharf. Her last owner was Jack and Newell Pty. Ltd. of Port Douglas. She was built by a man named Pagel. She was bought by Jack and Newell but the story is that she only made the journey from Pagel Island to where she now lies.

Section F Row 4 / 6 & 7

BOWDEN, Hugh Max born approx. 1909 died Jun 1990 aged 81 years

"Hugh Max Bowden 1909 - 1990 born Didsbury Lancashire father of Anna, Melissa & Kate Always loved & missed"

BOWDEN, Cornelia Diana born approx. 1922 died Oct 1988 aged 66 years

"Cornelia Diana Bowden 1922 - 1988 born Kingston Sussex mother of Melissa & Kate Gods speed with our love"

Sydney Morning Herald Thursday 19 March 1953

A young Englishwoman who left her Sussex home seven years ago to "follow the sun" and eventually reached her present home, the far north Queensland coastal town of Port Douglas, is in Sydney to discuss with her agents the marketing of the products of her full-time job up north-shell jewellery. She is Mrs. Max Bowden.

...We put all our savings into a banana plantation near Innisfail," she said, "because my husband's a farmer. We were on it two years, then suddenly, floods came, and the whole place was under 20 feet of water. The place was wrecked, we were broke.

...So we got jobs washing dishes in a restaurant in Port Douglas, 40 miles north of Cairns, where there are only 120 people. It's one of those lovely, lonely places, the end of the rail, and the road, almost everything-but a good sugar-loading port.

..."For months we lived in a tin shack, but then we bought an 80-year-old wooden house on stilts that has weathered all the cyclones. We practically live off the huge shaggy garden. All sorts of vegetables, tropical fruits grow there with- out much help from us. They're wonderfully handy when I try out all sorts of new island dishes I hear about.

...Although the shell business which each day occupies them from dawn often till late at night-started three years ago with a few shells collected out of curiosity, and a necklace made for a friend, Mr. and Mrs. Bowden now have commissioned collectors all "over the reef, New Guinea and the islands.

Section F Row 7 / 6 & 7

SHIRLEY, Stanley James born 11 Mar 1906 died 9 Feb 1985 aged 78 years and 10 months

"In memory of Stan Shirley Born 1906 Died 1985 Beloved Brother of Ken"

SHIRLEY, Kenneth George born 25 Jun 1914 died 6 Mar 1992 aged 77 years and 8 months

SHIRLEY, Laurel Hetty May "Billie" born 28 Jun 1915 died 4 Oct 2003 aged 88 years and 3 months

"In memory of Ken Shirley Born 1914 Died 1992 Beloved Husband & Companion of Billie"

"In Memory of Laurel (Billie) Shirley Born 1915 Died 2003"

Australian Prospectors and Miners Hall of Fame Kalgoorlie W.A.

In the case of prospector Ken Shirley, his contribution to the minerals industry was the discovery in 1969 of Poseidon's Western Australian Mt Windarra nickel ore body near Laverton which became an international sensation, not so much by its intrinsic geology, but rather by the way it carried a scrambling stock market which became almost a daily epic to all of us who lived through it. The "wildest stock market boom the nation has ever seen" as Trevor Sykes labelled it – not forgetting of course its excesses and its certain following bust.

...Before WWII his lifelong companion and later wife, Billie, teamed up with him on his gold leases and they relied on their combined natural talents to continue to seek a payable strike – Ken pursuing the illusive reefs and Billie homemaking in their bough shed and augmenting their income from poker winnings earned from the rough and tumble Tennant Creek gambling schools.

...After visiting Port Douglas in the mid-60s, in 1970 he and Billie returned to the little village of Port Douglas. In those balmy pre-Skase days, the population was struggling towards 300 and Ken and Billie had fitted in as "locals" pretty quickly. He and Billie were unpretentious people and never exhibited any show of their successes, maybe with the exception of Billie's Mercedes car, which was the only one in town in those days and was mainly used to transport her and her bullterrier "Bully" to the various card games she loved to organise.

Stan Shirley is also buried beside his brother Ken and he also was a Northern Territory and West Australian prospector with some successes of his own. He assisted his brother in the exploration and pegging of claims of the Poseidon nickel discovery by Ken.

Licensed Victuallers, Central Hotel Port Douglas

Kenneth George Shirley, Licensee from 3 September 1964 to 8 April 1966 (owner of freehold)

These notes are available at the Court House Museum in Wharf Street Port Douglas or available on the Douglas Shire Historical Society's web-site: <http://www.douglashistory.org.au>

RECORD OF MARKED GRAVES AT THE OLD PORT DOUGLAS CEMETERY

Although every effort has been made to crosscheck individual details, official burial records have been sighted only as far back as April 1908. Should this list contain inaccuracies or errors, the Society makes apology and asks for it to be brought to attention, thus allowing correction of this record to be made. It is hoped that this work in its present form shall assist those wishing to compile personal family histories, other research and the like.

