



# Friends of Waikumete Inc.

Commemorate 125 years  
March 19 1886 - March 19 2011

**Florence Lena Bell**, was born 4 January 1885, as Florence Serra, (recorded in IGI records) daughter of Edmund and Jessie Bell, of Bellwood, Mt Roskill. Florence died March 16 1886 of dysentery, aged 14 months. She was buried on March 19 1886 in Non Conformist Division A, Row 1 Plot 1. **We believe this to be the First Burial in Waikumete Cemetery.** On March 18, Edmund Bell had purchased four plots at the cost of Six Pounds and the cemetery charges were twelve and six pence.

**William Appleby Tye**, was a little eight month old baby buried a month later on April 17 1886 The gravesite is Public Division A Section 1 Plot 1 This is an unmarked grave. The first burial in Public Division A. After the official closure of Symond St Cemetery on April 15 1886.

**William Hibbs Long was the First burial in Anglican Division A Section 1 Plot 1** His burial took place on April 17 1886 and is at the entrance by the Chapel Cemetery Gates.



## In March 1886 Waikumete (Waikomiti) Cemetery was opened for Burials

The burial areas were planned out in a grid pattern (popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century) with the Anglican denomination closest to the railway line and then Wesleyan, Presbyterian, Non Conformist, Roman Catholic, Hebrew and Public. (in that order.) In the first year 559 burials were recorded.

Funeral trains to Waikomiti Station (now Glen Eden) often had box cars with a cross in which the coffins were placed. There was a special siding and platform for the unloading of caskets. Sometimes a horse drawn hearse took the remains to the grave site, but often, the remains of the poor were trundled in a wheelbarrow. The graves of paupers in the last century lie in an area called Gum Tree Gully, adjacent to the 1918 Flu epidemic plots.

The Boyd memorial is a large elaborate monument facing the entrance and level with the chapel. George Boyd, founder of Newton Potteries on Gt North Rd, Ponsonby, died on March 10 1886, and was buried with his first wife, Elizabeth in Symond St Cemetery.

His body was disinterred two months later and shifted to the new Waikumete Cemetery. Helen, his second wife, died Oct 2 1898. She was generous to her charities and many statues she purchased are in parks. There is an epitaph to Helen, portrait of Boyd and the figure of Zealandia towers over the monument.

The Jewish Prayer house, which was situated in the Hebrew Area, was constructed circa 1886-1887 and first used on 15<sup>th</sup> June, 1887 for the burial of Mr F. H Lewisson.

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## Smart sleuth solves cemetery secret

Some smart sleuthing has solved the last, great mystery of Waikumete Cemetery — who, when and where was the first person buried? For some time it was believed to be William Hibbs Long whose grave is in the old Anglican section at the Glen Eden end of the graveyard.

He and his family are buried in plot one. But a past sextor, Bill Graham, admitted some time ago to being puzzled because the entry in the first register for burials at Waikumete was plot number two.

He said there was a belief the first burial was of a child called Willie Bell but he was unable to shed any more light on the mystery.

Enter genealogist and researcher Audrey Lange, secretary of the Friends of Waikumete Cemetery.

Her search of the cemetery records produced a number of Bells but no Willie. Her next move was to research copies of the New Zealand



**MYSTERY SOLVED:** Audrey Lange at the grave now confirmed to be the site of Waikumete's first burial.

land index of deaths at Henderson Library.

William Hibbs Long was buried on April 17, 1886 which led Mrs Lange to look for deaths in the name of Bell in the first quarter of 1886.

She found two — David and Florence Lena.

Back to the cemetery.

There was no David Bell. He may have been buried at the Symonds St cemetery according to Mrs Lange, but the burial of Florence Lena Bell, aged 14 months, was recorded on March 19, 1886 (the month the cemetery was opened).

Her grave was plot one, section one of the nonconformist block A,

just down from the Buchanan family memorial and crypt adjacent to Glenview Rd.

The cause of death was recorded as dysentery, a common child killer last century. Cemetery records listed the funeral director as the child's father, Edmund Bell, an architect.

Mr Bell bought four plots for six pounds to be used for family interments and it is there he and his wife Jessie rest.

But where does that leave Willie Bell?

A genealogist never gives up and Mrs Lange

was tipped off about a grave in the old Anglican section with the words "Our Willie" enscribed on it, and underneath, "C and E Brown".

These, she presumed, were the names of the parents and another record search showed the name of William Thomas Brown, aged seven, of Ponsonby, interred on May 4, 1888.

All these graves will be visited in Mrs Lange's conducted walk for Friends of Waikumete on Sunday, October 1. Those interested should meet at the crematorium at 1.30pm.

## An Insight into 125 years ago!

**The Auckland Star of 17 April 1886:** The first interment in the new public cemetery at Waikomiti took place this afternoon, the body being that of a child, whose parents named Dye reside in Symonds Street. The funeral, instead of going by rail, went in vehicles by road, the cost, we are informed, being a few shillings less than if railway had been used. The road to the cemetery was found to be very good condition, metalled all the way, and the time occupied either way was one hour and twenty minutes. Rev C M Nelson read the burial service and the funeral arrangements were in charge of Mr Geo H Leaning. Burials were allowed in Symonds Street cemeteries up till Thursday last (15 April) so that the new cemetery was required on the first day after the old ones were closed. The burial today was in the public division of the cemetery.

Lisa Truttman found this article.

No wonder everyone was confused about Willy's Surname. Newspaper has an Error, "Dye"! This is reported as the First Burial. n.b. It is One month after the burial of Florence Bell.

The Western Leader Friday September 15 1995 had the above article.

**Edmund Bell.** was born 28 December 1841, at St Pancras London, the son of Henry and Mary Ann Bell.

In 1851, the family were living in Saffron, Walden, in Essex. Edmund was a scholar at this time. He continued his studies at the Toronto Commercial College.

Edmund married Jessie (nee) Oliphant, in Ontario, Toronto East in 1870, (as per the 1871 Census of Canada). Edmund was 28 years and Jessie was 21 years at the time of their marriage. Jessie was born 7 July 1846 at St Nicholas, Aberdeen, the daughter of Walter Oliphant and Alicia (nee) Smith who were married 13 May 1839 at Dysart, Fyfeshire, according to the IGI records.

The family came to NZ c. 1878 and settled in Auckland where Edmund practised his profession as an architect supervising the erection of numerous public and private buildings.

He was President of the Auckland Institute of Architects, and was connected with a number of public bodies and social and political organisations.

He represented Birkenhead and Northcote on the Auckland Harbour Board and was the Architect for the Baptist Tabernacle at the top of Queen St, Auckland, The building cost eight thousand, three hundred pounds to build. Edmund, a Baptist attended regular church services on Sunday at the Baptist Tabernacle. (see Papers Past)

In the early 1840's, land was sub-divided along the main roads of Dominion, Mt Eden and Normanby Roads. These sections were sold by Crown Grants and were mostly 27-36 acres. Many allotments were created in the Northern part of the area and Edmund Bell purchased allotments of local farms in Mt Eden, which were subdivided into residential blocks.

(Today, Edmund, like a lot of others would have been known as a land speculator)

During the 1880's Edmund subdivided two allotments of residential land creating 41 sections. He named Raleigh, Bellwood, Marlborough, Cromwell and Taupata Streets in Mt Eden, on the fringe of cabbage tree swamp (close to Eden Park.) see Eden Park Neighbours Association website- History of the Area p2 1880-1890.) Electoral records show that Edmund Bell owned land in Auckland from 1880- 1900.

Edmund Bell also held several lots of shares of "The Waihi Consols Gold Mining Co. Of Waihi, Hauraki Mining District. Jessie Bell was on the Women's Electoral Roll for 1893 in the Eden Electorate. Her residence is shown as Birkenhead.



Mr. E. Bell.

**MR. E. BELL.**



**18. Baptist Tabernacle** **A** **I**  
429 Queen Street

Completed in 1886, the scale, style and position of this imposing building by architect Edmund Bell were intended as a statement. The Baptists eschewed the Gothic style favoured by most churches and built this Neo-Classical basilica to underline their return to the tenets of the early Christian church. The façade is based on that of the 1860s London Metropolitan Tabernacle. Thomas Spurgeon was the Auckland pastor. His father was the pastor of the London Tabernacle.

Research on Bell family provided by  
**Lani Rimington,**  
Secretary Waitakere Branch NZSG



**Walter Oliphant** was the eldest. Son. Born 6 December 1871 in Toronto.

**Jessie Alice**, born 1876 in Toronto and died aged three months in Toronto.

**Edmund (Edmond) Herbert** born 13 April 1877 in Toronto, died in Auckland in 1899 in his 23<sup>rd</sup> year.

**Florence Lena (Sera)** born 4 Jan 1885, died 16 March 1886.

**Jessie** died 11 May 1911, aged 61 years in Vancouver. Interred at Waikumete on 19 May 1911

**Edmund** died 13 July 1917 aged 76.

Edmund and Jessie spent their last 12 years in Canada. They often returned to NZ over the ensuing years.

**Walter Oliphant Bell**, was a company director at the time of his death and had only been in NZ for three days when he died suddenly at Auckland Hospital on 20 November 1948. His funeral was held at the Watney Sibun & Co, Chapel, Khyber Pass, Newmarket. He was buried at Waikumete on the 23 November 1948. Walter was the father of Evelyn, Bernhard and Harold as per (Death Notice NZ Herald, Tuesday, 23 November 1948)

## **SOME EARLY HISTORY OF WAIKUMETE CEMETERY**

Mary Gilligan wrote in our December 2007 issue of Cemetery News . She outlines delays because when 100 acres, Lot 248 was reserved for a cemetery, no one was given the local authority to manage. In 1881, a further large block of land, 188 acres, Lot 248A was added and in 1883 this portion of land was “vested in the Auckland City Council for it’s Control and Management” This allowed the cemetery to be available for burials and in January 1886, tenders were accepted from Mr E Morris (585 pounds) to build the mortuary chapel and Mr E Heron to build two Sextons houses, 297 pounds and 189 pounds. Roads, paths and fences were constructed and shelter belts planted.

The First and main entrance was at the Glen Eden end of the cemetery, where the Newmarket to Kaipara railway ran through cemetery land, and a station had been purpose built. Ironically, this 100 acre part was not vested till 1915. In total about 309 acres was set aside for a cemetery.

### **19 MARCH 2011 EVENTS**

#### **11 AM CEREMONY TO MARK 125<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE BURIAL OF FLORENCE LENA (SERA) BELL**

**Chapel open with Historical Displays to view**

**The Friends of Waikumete Historical Walks**

**Matthew Gray, author of Tales of the Crypt**

**The West Auckland Historical Society**

**The Waitakere Genealogist Society**

**The Dalmatian Historical and Genealogy Society**

**Cemetery Genealogy Help**

**Glen Eden Primary School Kapa Haka Group**

**THE FRIENDS OF WAIKUMETE SINCERELY THANK  
AUCKLAND COUNCIL FOR THEIR SUPPORT**

**We thank Daniel Sales and his team at the Cemetery Office**