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PENGUIN
SELF GUIDED WALK
KARORI CEMETERY HERITAGE TRAIL

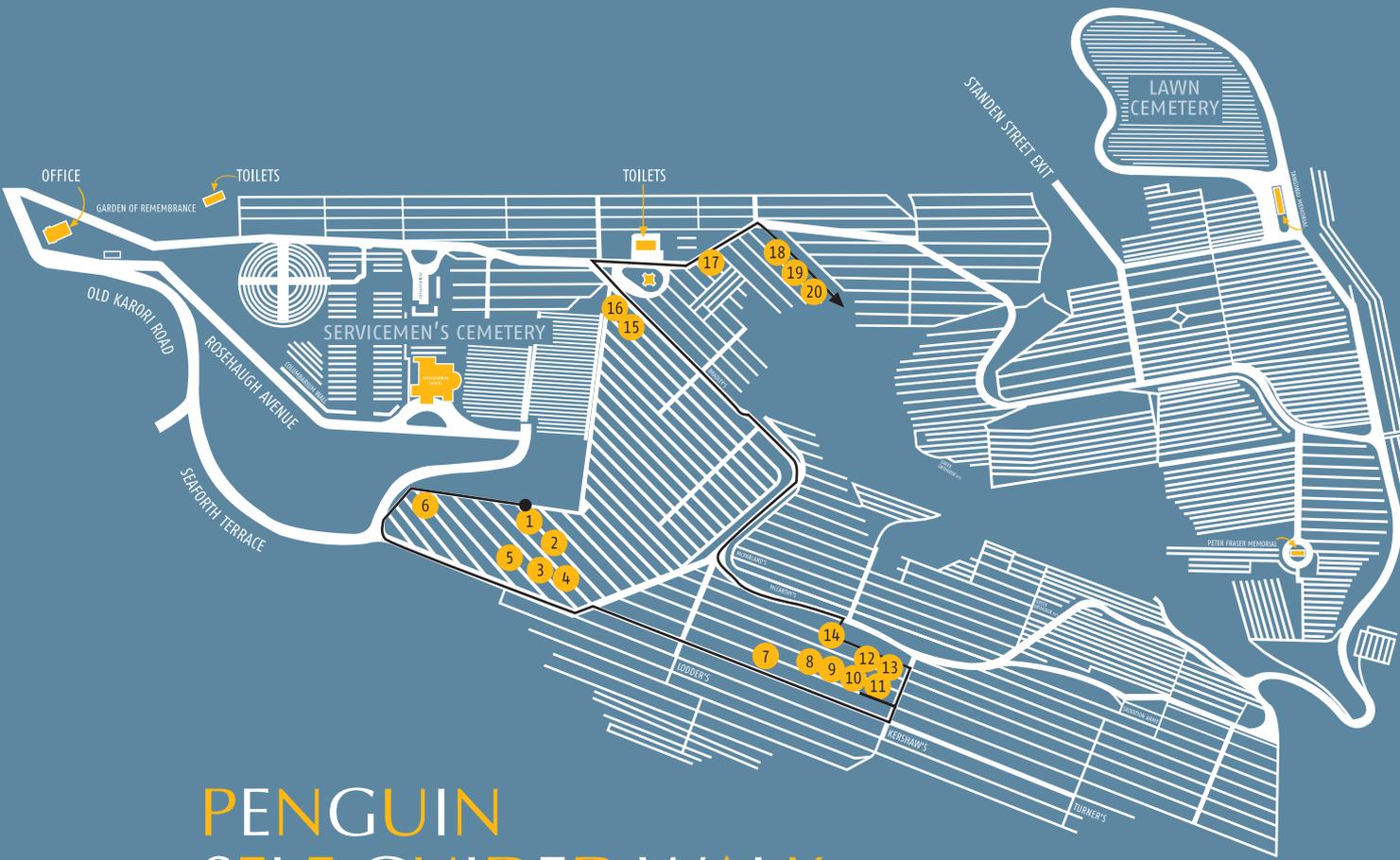


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WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL

Wellington



PENGUIN SELF GUIDED WALK

KARORI CEMETERY HERITAGE TRAIL

TRAIL 

SITE NO.  CORRESPONDS TO NUMBERS
THROUGHOUT TRAIL GUIDE

STREET 

PENGUIN SELF GUIDED WALK KARORI CEMETERY HERITAGE TRAIL

This walk takes about to 90 minutes to two hours. Markers direct you round the walk, all the paths are signposted and the graves are marked with the *Penguin* wreck marker. The walk starts at the Hale memorial and finishes at the second *Penguin* memorial in the Roman Catholic section of the cemetery.

The Wellington City Council gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Bruce E Collins, author of *The Wreck of the Penguin*, Steele Roberts, Wellington and of Roger Steele of Steele Roberts.

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Author: Deirdre T Wogan

Wellington City Council is a member of the Heritage Trails Foundation
Brochures for other Council walks are available at the Visitor Information Office 101 Wakefield Street. You can also visit the Wellington City Council on-line at www.wellington.govt.nz

Cover image: *Penguin* leaving Wellington (Zak Photograph, Hocken Library)

Introduction

The wreck of the *Penguin* on 12 February 1909 with a death toll of 72 was the greatest New Zealand maritime disaster of the 20th century. The ship went down in Cook Strait, only a few kilometres from where the *Wahine* was wrecked in April 1968, with the loss of 51 lives.

Built of iron in 1864, on its Glasgow–Liverpool run the *Penguin* was reputed to be one of the fastest and most reliable steamers working in the Irish Sea. At the time of the wreck she had served the Union Steam Ship Company for 25 years, most recently on the Lyttelton and Cook Strait run.

The *Risso's* dolphin known to thousands as Pelorus Jack cavorted round the *Penguin's* bows in the early years of the century, but after a collision in 1904 kept its distance – until January 1909 when it suddenly reappeared. The only surviving female passenger, Ada Hannam, reported feeling a 'strange sensation' as Jack dived and leapt round the bow of the steamer as they left Nelson on the afternoon of 12 February. Nevertheless, she boarded the steamer again after the Picton stopover. Ada was hailed as the heroine of the wreck for the dreadful odds she overcame, but the price was high – she lost her husband George and their four children, Ronald, George, Margaret Ellen Amelia, known as Amelia, and Ruby aged between 10 and two years.

The captain had set a course to steer clear of the rocks and reefs round Tongue Point on the Wellington coast, but at 9 pm the cloudy skies broke into heavy rain and poor visibility made it impossible to see the light shining from Pencarrow Head. He altered course so that they would avoid the hazardous Thoms Rock. In the words of Captain Naylor:

"It was raining steadily at quarter to ten, and I rang 'Stand by' at quarter to ten. I did not slow down. I could not see anything in shore, and only had my own judgment to guide me as to where I was."

His judgment was in error. Disaster struck at 10.02 pm, when a sound “like the rending of a gigantic piece of calico” reverberated throughout the steamer. There was no panic and the disembarkation of 102 passengers and crew was orderly. Although the *Penguin* had enough boats and rafts, launching lifeboats in such appalling weather conditions was hazardous in the extreme.

The first 20 ft lifeboat left the steamer fully loaded, but within moments Second Engineer William Luke, in charge of Boat 2, saw “a sea (that) came along like a mountain” and capsized the boat, killing all on board. Of the 102 who sailed, 46 passengers and 26 employees drowned.

Penguin sinking in Cook Strait. (Auckland Weekly News, Otago Settlers Museum)



At dawn, wreckage had already washed up on the coast between Cape Terawhiti and Sinclair Head. Only 30 people had survived the wreck, 24 reaching shore on the ship's two big rafts. Only six people who left the sinking vessel in lifeboats survived the night.

Shepherds from Terawhiti sheep station (now known as Quartz Hill and Terawhiti Station) were the first to respond to the tragedy, escorting survivors to the station. Searchers scoured the coast from Cape Terawhiti in the north to Karori Stream in the south, recovering bodies from the jagged rocks and surf, often struggling in deep water to carry the dead to shore, and then carrying survivors on horseback across the flooded Karori Stream.





Above Left: Captain Francis Naylor when harbourmaster and pilot at Wanganui. (Wanganui District Council Archives)
Above Right: Ada Hannam, the only female survivor. (Zak, Otago Witness)

It was all done while the wind howled and the rain sleeted down. Second Engineer Luke, who is also buried at Karori Cemetery, was found alive, stuck halfway up a cliff.

Malcolm Ross, whose report appeared in Dunedin's *Otago Witness*, was one of the first on the scene.

"I had not ridden more than 100 yards before my attention was attracted to something on the beach. It proved to be a body of a little boy six or seven years of age. A few inches of white legs showing between his black stockings and his shrunk knickers first attracted my attention. Poor little chap, he was such a little fellow, and he had such a big lifebelt for him."



Ross continues his terrible tale:

"Just round a forbidding-looking bluff was discovered the body of a little girl, about 12 or 13 years of age, and a little further on was the body of a middle-aged woman, and still a few yards further away was the corpse of a woman apparently some 45 or 50 years of age. Just past the second lifeboat was seen the body of a young man, wearing a light grey suit, and apparently between 17 and 18 years of age."

Most of the bodies were taken to the Drill Hall in Buckle Street (although 13 were never found) for identification. Some had been identified by friends at the scene and were transported by packhorse to Makara. The morbid curiosity of the many people who haunted the beaches not to help but to gaze prompted the

decision to land the bodies at Miramar Wharf rather than the more accessible Queens Wharf.

A half-day holiday was declared for the funeral on 16 February and crowds massed the streets to watch the cortege of cabs and lorries led by the Mission Band playing dirges as they wound through the streets of Wellington and up to Karori cemetery.

At the official enquiry held in the aftermath of the disaster, Captain Naylor was severely reprimanded for his failure to put to sea when he had run a course of 18 miles. The court added that if he had put the vessel's head to sea at 9.40 pm the accident would have been avoided. They were, however, unanimous that after the wreck Captain Naylor did everything in his power to prevent loss of life.

There has been considerable argument over the causes of the *Penguin* wreck. Some of the evidence suggested that a strong current pulled the ship far off course and indicated that Captain Naylor was not in fact negligent.

This was not the first ship – nor the last – to go down on the treacherous south west coast of the North Island, with its complex tides and current and unpredictable weather.

The muffled drum behind the Mission Band leading the procession into Karori cemetery. (Zak postcard, courtesy John Eccles)



MARCH of the
S.S. PENGUIN

10-2-05

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1. The Hale Grave

Clarence (Clarry) and Marion Hale, aged 24 and 26 years, had only been married a year. They had been visiting Nelson so that Clarry could introduce his new wife from Sydney to friends and relations. A commercial traveller, he was described by the *Free Lance* as, "the handsomest, happiest fellow on the road. A real good sport, straight as a lance as to character and physique, he had endeared himself to all ... In the days of his early youth Clarry distinguished himself in the Queen City both by his yachting and football prowess."

The Hales were reported to have been seen clinging to the engine room skylight, determined to take their chances with the ship. Marion refused to leave without her husband when Captain Naylor called out to her to go, but he eventually persuaded the couple to get into the lifeboat.

In the two plots next to the Hale grave, two more victims were originally buried – Jennie Hunt and her friend Clara Noden (Smith and Pagonis plot). Both were domestic servants who had been on holiday together. Jennie Hunt worked for Mrs Chatfield of Island Bay and Clara Noden worked for Edward Bolton Bristow, a local merchant and sub-divider of Karori. His house was built where the Philippines Embassy now stands at 5 Bristow Place. Both employers attended the funeral, but neither plot was paid



for and both women were re-interred at the head of the plots when these were resold.

- ▶ **The fifth grave from the corner on the same side of this path is that of Charlie Bird, aged 33 years, who is commemorated with a grey granite obelisk.**

2. The Bird Grave

Charles Grace Bird was a commercial traveller on the West Coast for T and W Young, wine and spirits merchants. He was a keen footballer and athlete, and a fine swimmer. The gold watch he was wearing when his body was recovered had been presented to him by the Canterbury Amateur Swimming Club in 1894. He moved to Wellington from Christchurch in 1895, and played as a first five-eight for the Wellington Rugby Club and the Wellington province. He was later secretary of the Wellington Rugby Club and coached junior teams.

- ▶ **Go back to the entrance path and turn left downhill to the next signpost.**

*Bottom Left: Marion and Clarence Hale. (Auckland Public Libraries)
Bottom Centre: Jennie Hunt had been visiting her mother in Motueka. (Auckland Public Libraries)
Bottom Right: Charles Bird.*



3. The Main Penguin Memorial

The main *Penguin* Memorial is 14 concreted graves on the right hand side of the path.

Several of the crew are buried in this plot:

George William Claydon and Ernest Crook were saloon waiters; Edward Gale, William Ernest Henderson (from Port Chalmers, a member of the NZ Naval Reserve) and Thomas Woodford were able seamen; GF Johnson, nicknamed Wellum, was a pantryman; John Wood (also known as Ward) was a fireman; Felix Woodward had been a steward on the *Pateena*. He was on the broken No 3 lifeboat with Captain Naylor, and one of his hands was completely severed at the wrist. Captain Naylor had stayed on the



Penguin till he was swept off to cling on to a broken lifeboat. He told the *Auckland Weekly News*:

"There was one man on the broken boat beside me. I picked him up. He was a man who at one time was a steward on the *Pateena*, but I forgot his name at the moment. I know him well. He clung to her for a long time. She rolled over, and we both went under. When I came up I caught the wreckage. I did not see the other man, who had disappeared. We were then going over a reef. She rolled over twice."

Below: Wrecked lifeboat dashed on rocks the day after the storm. (KM Brown; Museum of Wellington City & Sea)



4. The Jacobs Grave

Three graves on from the memorial, still on the right hand side, is the grave of Alice Jacobs, aged 49, one of two cabin stewardesses. (The other, Annie Hope aged 33, is buried in Mount Street cemetery.) Alice, whose husband Charles had been a chief steward with the Union Steam Ship Company, had only transferred to the *Penguin* a month before the shipwreck.

Ida Hannam paid Alice tribute:

“The saloon stewardess helped us before we got into the boat. My word, she was a brave woman. She did everything – got blankets and wrapped us up, and was calm and collected, and didn’t flurry us in the least.”

The *Free Lance* wrote: “Their names ought to live in fragrant memory.” The Royal Humane Society of New Zealand awarded an In Memoriam Certificate which stated:

“Mrs Jacobs, stewardess, and Mrs Hope, fore-cabin stewardess, by their noble and unselfish conduct, in dealing out lifebelts, and giving words of cheer until the last passenger had gone over the side, earned the everlasting and heartfelt gratitude of many passengers. Mrs Jacobs and Mrs Hope might have saved their own lives by leaving the ship by the first boat.”

Miss W M Ribbands and Angelina Trice were originally buried between the memorial and Mrs Jacobs but the plots were not paid for, and the bodies were moved to the head of the plots concerned when they were resold. Miss W M Ribbands originally came from Hopchurch, Isle of Wight. Her brother Sydney Ribbands, a well-known Napier swimming enthusiast, was present at the funeral. Angelina Trice was twice a widow, one of a large family, and a pastrycook with at least two bakeries, who was travelling to arrange bulk supplies for her shops.

*Mrs. Jacobs, the Penguin stewardess.
(Dickie Collection ATL Wellington,
Ref No. G15472 1/2)*

- ▶ **Go back to the entrance path and turn left downhill to the next signpost.**

The Toomer Grave is 13 concrete graves along on the left-hand side, almost immediately behind the memorial with an angel on top of the plinth, a small marble angel at the foot and an open book in front.



5. The Toomer Grave

Amelia [Millie] Toomer and her two daughters lived in Berhampore and had visited Nelson for fruit picking. They were returning home for her husband Harry Toomer's birthday on the following Sunday, but the planned celebration was a day of mourning for bootmaker Harry Toomer and his sons William and Harry.

Ida Hannam saw Lifeboat No 1 lowered with Ivy and Alice Toomer and their mother aboard, and heard one of the girls say, "Oh, mother, we'll never see Daddy any more."

- ▶ **Go back to the entrance path and turn left downhill to the next signpost.**

The Hayes Grave is six concrete graves along on the left-hand side of the path.

*Anchor tribute to the Toomer family.
(ATL G 31776 1/2)*



6. The Hayes Grave

Thomas Hayes, the boatswain, was described by the *Free Lance* as one of the heroes of the disaster. His body was never recovered but his death is recorded, along with that of his small son, only a baby when Thomas last saw him, who died just before his fourth birthday in 1912.

“Some of the crew told me that the Bo’sun would not jump at the last, but remained on board,” said Captain Naylor.

- ▶ **Go back to the entrance to the path, and turn left. Follow the path downhill and round to the left to the back entrance to the cemetery. Walk straight down until the path bends to the left, then take the second right hand side path past the grave of William Knox Murphy (column surmounted by an urn and a low wall of bright brown ceramic bricks.)**

Continue down this side path until you come to a crossroad and walk straight down the path. Count 20 graves down on the left hand side to the McGuire grave, which is two down from the large Lockie grave (white column and black and white paving).

7. The McGuire Grave

The McGuire children, Rose Agnes aged 12, Ivy Alice aged 10, Wallace George aged nine and Florence Susan aged 5, all drowned in the wreck.

Tom McGuire, a Wellington Gas Company worker, lost his wife Sarah in 1906, leaving him with five young children to care for. He employed a housekeeper for a few years, but possibly because the cost was beyond his means, placed the four eldest with the St Andrews Presbyterian orphanage in Nelson, while the youngest, Florence Susan, then aged about two years, lived with relatives in Wellington.

In 1908 Rose begged her father to send Florence to Nelson and in November, Florence joined her sisters while Norman went to stay with his father.

On 2 February 1909, Tom married Cordelia Annie Mountstephen and the family were about to be reunited.

On the right side of the column is another inscription to the memory of Sarah McGuire, and on the left is an inscription erected by their Nelson schoolmates and other friends:

“Suffer little children to come unto me.”

- ▶ **Continue down to the next directional marker and head up the road to the first marker on the left. Twelve to 15 concrete graves on the right side up the path are four graves side by side.**



Top: An uncle of the McGuire children recovering their toys, picture books and saturated clothes from their broken box. (Otago Witness; Hocken Library)

Bottom: McGuire family: Ivy Alice, Norman, Thomas, Florence, Rose and Wallace. (Zak postcard, courtesy of Gladys Silcock)



8. Jessie Rennie

Jessie Rennie was lady's maid to Minnie Symons and had accompanied her and her two daughters to Motueka for the school holidays.

9. Keith Hawthorne Cape-Williamson

Keith had been visiting his brother, the station master at Wakefield, near Nelson. He had recently graduated from Canterbury College (part of the University of New Zealand). He was 22 and after a successful academic career at Christ's College he taught before studying at Canterbury College where he was awarded an exhibition in mental sciences (scholarship).

10. Thomas Rogers

Thomas Rogers was a native of Warwickshire who had lived in New Zealand for 35 years. He first settled in Wanganui and afterwards lived in Palmerston North, Feilding and Marton, eventually settling in Wellington for the last 13 years of his life.

A plumber by trade, he was an inventive man and had patented a combined spouting and ridge-capping machine, which was admired by experts in the field. He had been in Picton to fit up one of his inventions and was returning after completing his task. He was well known in Wellington, and for many years had been a constant traveller throughout New Zealand. He left a widow and seven adult children.



11. Walter Stanley Rentoul

Walter Rentoul had been third engineer on the *Penguin* for only six weeks. He was the second son of Walter Rentoul, for forty years a farmer at Takaka, now living in Nelson, who had himself been shipwrecked twice. After serving an engineering apprenticeship at Luke's foundry in Wellington, he joined the Union Company. He had served as relieving engineer aboard the *Waikare*, *Maori*, *Rosamond*, *Kotuku* and *Mapourika*.

The *Free Lance* reported:

"He was diligent, hard-working, and of such an inventive turn of mind that he could make a clock with anybody, and was equally handy at making or playing a violin. Some of his inventions as, for instance, a fruit-tree sprayer brought him in a little money with which he bought a house in Adelaide Road. He was unmarried but believed to be engaged."

Rentoul had three brothers and five sisters. His grandfather was a major in the 57th Regiment (Irish Fusiliers) and was with Sir John Moore when he fell mortally wounded at Corunna.

► **Note the spelling mistake on the headstone.**

Go back to the entrance path and turn left to the next signpost.

Count 5–6 concreted graves up on the right hand side to the Bone grave (surmounted by a boulder) and the Bishop grave, side by side.

Below Left: Jessie Rennie, maid to the Symons family.

Below Right: Thomas Rogers, who lived at 133 Adelaide Road. (Auckland Public Libraries)



Albert Bone of Dunedin. (Otago Witness)

12. The Bone and Bishop Graves

Albert Bone, aged 45 years, lived in Dunedin with his wife and family and was a commercial traveller for Sargood, Son and Ewen (boot department). He was deacon of the Moray Place Congregational Church in Dunedin, and a prominent member of the Choral Society and Liedertafel. As a soloist he was much in demand at private functions. According to the *Otago Witness*, "His genial nature and sunny smile made him one of the most loved men in the church."

Bone had only recently gone on the road for his firm, and this was his first visit to Marlborough. He was visiting Wellington for a surprise reunion with his son who worked for the Bank of New Zealand and had recently become engaged. Tragically, it was his son who, having joined the rescue operation because he

heard that his father might have been on the vessel, lifted the sailcloth covering a body to find it was his father.

13. The Bishop Grave

Elizabeth [Polly] Bishop of Berhampore and her three year old son Clarence are buried in the next grave. She had been on a working holiday picking hops in the Nelson district. Her husband William identified the bodies on the coast on Saturday.

- ▶ **Go back to the entrance path, and turn left uphill to the next signpost. Walk past 28 concrete graves to the left to the Urquhart grave. (Note: the grave does not mention the *Penguin*.)**

14. The Urquhart Grave

Chief engineer Robert William Urquhart had served with the Royal Navy for ten years before joining the Union Company in 1881. He had worked on the *Penguin* since 1902. Engineers and firemen of the Union Company said that “he was like a father to us” and was always bright, steady and staunch.

Urquhart was born in Sligo, Ireland in 1844 and was survived by his wife Ella and three children.

- ▶ **Turn around and walk up the short side path to the road and follow directional markers. Continue uphill and round the corner marked Post Office Corner and then straight on past the Lavin vault on your right and the Bradley grave (column surmounted by a cross, scene of Peter Jackson’s *Braindead*) till you come to a crossroads. Continue across past 11 graves on the left side of main drive, this side of the Underwood vault, with the large marble angel on roof.**

15. The Symons Grave

Minnie Ethel Symons was the widow of W. R. Symons, formerly shipping manager for W and G Turnbull and Co. She was a daughter of W S Reid, ex-Solicitor General, and sister of Mrs Herbert Rawson of Wellington Terrace. She had taken her daughters Mary Alice aged 15 years and Ethel Agnes aged 14 years, and her maid Jennie Rennie to Motueka for the school holidays. They stayed an extra fortnight because of the benefit to her younger daughter's health. The girls were going to be bridesmaids for their Rawson cousin on their return.

- ▶ **Continue down the broad path to the Underwood vault.**

16. The Underwood Vault

Henry James Underwood's body was not recovered until 21 March from Titahi Bay. He arrived in New Zealand in 1862, aged 12 years. He became a cabinet maker and in 1879 eloped with Harriet Ellen Houghton. They had two children, Sophia and Sydney.

Underwood was a builder by trade and owned property in Newtown and Seatoun, but he invested in property and was eventually able to devote most of his time to bowls and to his family. With his brother-in-law George Price he was one of the pioneer members of the Newtown Bowling Club. Quiet and genial in manner, he was held in general esteem.

His was the last body to be found, six weeks after the shipwreck and the body was identified by an inscribed wristwatch which had been presented to him by his bowling club.

- ▶ **Continue to roadway intersection, follow directional marker to the right.**

The Holcroft grave is on the corner, beside the directional signpost, with several rose bushes growing on the grave.

Henry Underwood. (Courtesy of the Underwood family)

17. The Holcroft Grave

Sylvester Edward Holcroft was an upholsterer (or perhaps an ironmonger) in Blenheim. He was travelling with his friend Thomas Riggs-Miller, who survived after a large wave washed the two men off the keel of Boat 4 because he managed to grab hold of a spar drifting about in the water:

“For the next half hour we were swimming about, I holding on to my chum’s arm all the time, and also to the spar. Holcroft then got a terrible mouthful of water. We still had hold of the sailcloth attached to the spar, and as we hung on to it I said, ‘We will soon be on land, Sil! Cheer up!’ But after that last mouthful he seemed to lose heart or vitality altogether. His head fell forward, but I kept on holding it up until I was quite exhausted myself. Then his head fell forward again, and I knew he was gone.”

- ▶ **Continue down roadway to next directional marker.**

The Brittain Grave is 14 concreted plots along between the Johnston family graves and the second *Penguin* memorial.



18. The Brittain Grave

Mary Brittain was the wife of F H Brittain, a Blenheim-based stock inspector. She was travelling to Wellington to look after her husband who had fallen ill while visiting the capital to attend veterinary classes. Mrs Brittain was the first of the *Penguin* victims to be buried. She left three sons and a daughter.

Gustav Troadec was originally buried next to the Brittain grave area but was later removed to the head of the plot that was later sold. He was a 17 year old from the Industrial School in Nelson, on his way to a job on a farm. The youngest of five children, he was brought up in Dunedin, and was survived by his parents and one sister.

*The Penguin wreck at Sinclair Head, Wellington.
(Photographer: Sydney Charles Smith. S. C. Smith Collection. ATL
Wellington. REf. No. G20153 1/1)*



- ▶ **On the far side of the memorial is the Doran grave.**

19. The Doran Grave

Mary Agnes Doran, aged 22 years, was a champion swimmer. She lived with her parents in Marlborough but was going to visit a married sister at 5 Aorangi Terrace. As the proposed godmother to her sister's baby boy it was important for her to attend the christening ceremony in Wellington. In later life her brother Don Doran was a friend of Frank Sargeson.



20. The Second Penguin Memorial

The second *Penguin* memorial is so similar in style to the first memorial that it was probably completed by the same monumental mason.

George Barnes was a trimmer (a junior engine room rating, responsible mainly for heaving coal).

George Gaffra was the donkeyman (the leading engine room rating). His body was not recovered and buried until 25 February.

John Rafferty was a greaser (ship's mechanic), and the sole support of his aged mother, in Ireland.

Searching for bodies using a Penguin raft.
(S. C. Smith, ATL Y201146 1/1)



- ▶ **At this point you have two alternatives. To end your walk you can retrace your steps to the broad path and the old octagonal chapel. From there you can follow the main path to the front entrance to the cemetery. If you are parked by the main chapel you can reach Rosehaugh Avenue by walking through the Servicemen's Cemetery.**
- ▶ **If you are still energetic enough, or if you have a car, you can visit the grave of William Webb Luke, a wreck survivor buried at Karori cemetery. Retrace your steps to the broad path but turn right and follow it down and around the hill, past the Standen Street Exit path on your left. Take the next side path up the hill on the left, between the beautifully decorated yellow grave of Lesilaina (right side) and the Hodgkinson Grave (open book sculpture) on the left.**



Count eight paths up the hill on the righthand side. The grave of William Webb Luke is next to you at the edge of the 8th path, just behind the Wilson grave. He was the *Penguin's* Second Engineer.

From here, walk back down to the broad path and follow it up through the centre of the cemetery to the front entrance.

Plaque at the Museum of Wellington City and Sea. (Although it says 75 lives were lost, the confirmed death toll is 72.)

