



S.S. Penguin Shipwreck Walk

Cemetery walk focusing on shipwreck victims

The harrowing stories of people who lost their lives when the inter-island ferry Penguin sank off Wellington's south coast in 1909 will be vividly recalled in a fascinating self-guided walk through Karori Cemetery.

The disaster was the worst New Zealand shipwreck of the 20th Century and 40 of the victims are buried at Karori.

The ship went down at night in appalling conditions only a few kilometres from where the Wahine foundered some 60 years later. Seventy-two died in the Penguin disaster including the 14 children aboard and all but one of the 17 women.

Bodies, wreckage and the 30 survivors washed ashore on the rugged coastline. The only woman survivor, Ada Hannam, lost her husband and four children in the disaster. She came ashore clinging to the hull of a heavy up-turned lifeboat with a hypothermic teenage boy and her dead two-year-old daughter and was in the process of scratching her way out of the shingle when they were rescued.

Wellington came to a stand still for a mass funeral procession that wended its way through the city and Kelburn on to the Karori Cemetery. A half day holiday was declared. Shops, offices and schools closed and the streets along the procession route were crowded with people.

The saddest sight was the four little white coffins of the McGuire children who had been temporarily living in a Nelson orphanage. They were returning to Wellington to be reunited with their widowed father who had just remarried.



"It was the Mount Erebus disaster of its day," says Deirdre Wogan, the Karori Historical Society member who prepared the notes for the walk. "Everybody knew somebody who was in some way connected."

The self-guided shipwreck walk takes approximately 1 to 1.5 hours. Markers direct you around the walk. All the paths are sign posted and all the graves are marked with the Penguin Wreck marker.

The map guide for this walk is available from the administration office, Karori Cemetery. Phone 4766109 or Fax 4768 242.

Walk starts in front of the Main Chapel in Rosehaugh Ave, cross the road, and the central grassy area and road again directly ahead is the start Signpost for this walk.

