

1. PURPOSE OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The purpose of this Management Plan is to provide a framework for the day-to-day management of the Makara and Karori cemeteries, put in place a process to manage cemetery assets and to develop the cemeteries future potential.

Both cemeteries have a number of generic and area-specific issues that are addressed by this Management Plan. The cemeteries are an integral part of the social fabric of Wellington and their management and amenity should reflect the sense of history and the memorial role they play.

Since the founding of Wellington City, a number of cemeteries have served the local community. This Management Plan relates to the two main public cemeteries that are open for burials - Karori and Makara Cemeteries. Other cemeteries not covered by the Management Plan include Mount Street, Bolton Street, St. Stephen's Cemetery (Tawa), Johnsonville. There are also a number of church cemeteries which are not managed by Council including St Mathew's Church, Holy Trinity Church and the Catholic Church site - all in the Makara and Ohariu Valleys.

2. HISTORY & DESCRIPTION

2.1 KARORI CEMETERY

Karori Cemetery covers 35.5 ha and merges into Otari Wiltons Bush. There are approximately 75,000 interments, and 35,000 plots. Abutting land use includes regenerating indigenous forest (part of Wiltons Bush) to the north, recreational playing fields to the east, and residential housing to the west and south.

The environment has been greatly modified from the original bush clad, rolling hill country. Remnants of the natural environment are confined to the gully and natural drainage system within, basically, the northern half of the cemetery. This is largely 'undiscovered' and supports indigenous bush and lowland forest similar to that clothing the hills in Wilton's Bush. However, within the cemetery, the pattern of indigenous vegetation is much more linear and confined. Landform has been altered to accommodate roads - with some quite major cuttings. The prevailing pattern of planting is very much determined by the layout of graves, grassed open space and patterns of circulation.

In the 1870s public pressure grew to establish a new cemetery, primarily due to the Bolton Street Cemetery's proximity to the city. In 1882 the government passed the Cemeteries Act, which set regulations for the management of New Zealand cemeteries. One of the Act's requirements was that an old cemetery could not close without a new site opening. So the decision came in 1890 that, of the proposed sites

(Khandallah, Karori and Melrose) the land offered in Karori was the most suitable for a new cemetery. Residents of Karori had long been waiting for a link road between Polhill Gully and Baker's Hill, and the new cemetery was to be opened and interments to occur as soon as possible after the completion of this road.

The first burial (Fred Fish) occurred in 1891, though no regular use of the new cemetery occurred until 1892. Fred Fish lay alone for these six months, in a grave which was unmarked for 100 years until centenary activities deemed him worthy of notice.

The first significant structure built at the cemetery was the sexton's cottage, an elegant villa with unusual, pointed arch windows. The house was built in 1891 and sat on the site of the present cemetery office until the 1950s. Another important early structure built by the Council and which still stands today was a shelter for mourners. The building was later informally named the Jewish Chapel, because of its physical proximity to the Jewish section of the cemetery.

The crematorium, including a chapel, was designed by noted Wellington architect John Sydney Swan. Six of the chapel windows were later replaced with stained glass designed and made in the An Tur Gloine (Tower of Glass) factory in Dublin.

Within Karori Cemetery there are many historically significant memorials and gravesite including people involved in Shackleton's expedition, the Penguin sinking and the Tangiwai disaster. Four previous prime-ministers and many of Wellington's past mayors are buried within the cemetery.

The cemetery office is based at Karori Cemetery. Both Karori and Makara Cemeteries and the crematorium are managed from here. Records are available from 1891, corresponding to the opening of the Karori Cemetery. Information for Makara Cemetery and for cremations is available from their respective starting dates. Records can be searched by name or plot location, and there is an ongoing project of computerisation to facilitate searching.

The cemetery office holds the records for 151,409 people who have been interred or cremated. There are more than 3,113,995 separate records relating to these people kept in the Karori Cemetery office for public viewing. As well as catering for visitors to the cemeteries, staff field numerous phone calls in relation to genealogical information.

For a more in-depth account of Karori Cemetery's history please refer to Appendix Six.



Figure 1 – Karori Cemetery, 1896. Photo shows the mortuary chapel surrounded by early graves in the Anglican, public, Jewish and Catholic sections. (ATL F3723 ½).

2.2 MAKARA CEMETERY

Makara Cemetery is situated 13 kilometres from the centre of Wellington and is a combination of sloping, hilly land and gullies, spread over approximately 84 hectares. Ten hectares are currently used for cemetery purposes.

In 1940 the Board of Health, under the Health Act 1920, required the provision of a cemetery for Wellington due to the diminishing number of plots available at Karori Cemetery for pre-purchase. The Cemeteries Act 1908 prohibited the establishment of a cemetery within any Borough or Town District, therefore the Council of the time selected Makara as the new site. The selection was finalised in 1946 and the land was purchased under the Public Works Act in two blocks: 1951 and 1955. The first burial occurred in 1965.

Since the Cemetery opened there has been concern that Makara's inaccessibility was contributing to the preference for cremation at Karori Cemetery. The Evening Post (4 February 1965) when commenting on the state of the Makara Road stated: "A likely result is an increase in the number of cremations". Already 75 percent of all people who could possibly be cremated - remembering that some churches do not believe in cremation - were being cremated at this time. The Makara road still presents an obstacle to the use of this cemetery.

Beautification of the cemetery is an ongoing activity as the land is considered to be bleak and windswept and not a pleasant setting for interments.

The Makara Cemetery (developed area) is approximately one third full and there is a need to begin thinking about planning for new areas in terms of planting, road access

and services. At current rates of use Makara Cemetery will cater for demand well into the future.

The unused cemetery resource at Makara is presently being put to alternative use – either being grazed or regenerating gorse/native vegetation. This Management Plan looks at the amount of resource (space) that is needed for future provision at Makara Cemetery.



Figure 2 – Makara Cemetery, 2003

2.3 CREMATORIUM

The issue of a crematorium for Wellington was first raised in 1891. Land was set aside for a crematorium at Karori, however the issue was not progressed, until the next century.

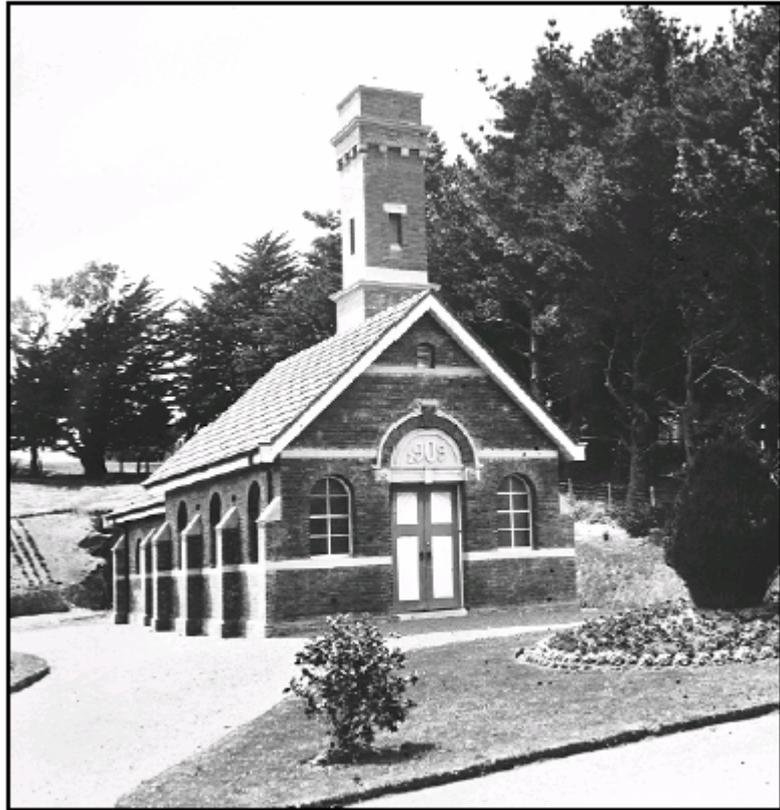
“Its introduction was largely due to the advocacy of cremation by Miss Studholme who returned from England early in the century imbued with the idea that cremation was the only common sense method of disposing of the dead. She waited on the Mayor and Council of that time and such was the impression she made that the work was put in hand.” (Evening Post, 12 April 1944).

The crematorium chapel, using a coke-fired cremator, was established in 1909. Cremation gradually grew in popularity, with cremations being 0.6% of total interments in 1909, 10.7% in 1933, and 50.64% in 1950. Cremation was promoted as a solution to the use of productive land for cemeteries. It was also, as a pamphlet published in 1935 by WCC states, seen as “the most hygienic method of disposal of the dead”. Early resistance on religious grounds faded, and by the 1950s the practice of cremation had become generally accepted.

In March 1959 a new, larger chapel was opened at Karori to meet increased demand and the cremators were upgraded to gas fired burners in 1965 and 1971.

In terms of heritage values, the crematorium is thought to be the first one established in the Southern Hemisphere. The chapel and crematorium is classified as category I by the Historic Places Trust as a notable heritage item. This is particularly for its stained

glass windows that were added in the period from 1914 to 1939. The small octagonal Mortuary Chapel is classified as a category II heritage building.



**Figure 3 – The Crematorium and Chapel, date unknown.
(WCC archives 00158_0_624-12)**