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Unearthly Landscapes:

The Development of the Cemetery in Nineteenth Century New Zealand

Stephen Deed

A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.

24 November 2004
Abstract

Written, visual and material evidence demonstrates that the indigenous and immigrant peoples of nineteenth century New Zealand both retained aspects of their traditional burial practices and forms of memorialisation while modifying others in response to their new environmental and social contexts.

Maori had developed a complex set of burial rituals by the beginning of the nineteenth century, practised within the framework of tangihanga. These included primary and secondary burial and limited memorialisation, with practices varying between iwi. Change and continuity characterised the development of Maori burial practice and places during the nineteenth century. Maori appropriated European practices and materials, translated traditional practices into new materials, and new practices into traditional materials. Although urupa came to appear more European, they were still firmly embedded in the framework of tangihanga and notions of tapu.

The nineteenth century settlement of New Zealand occurred at a time of transition in British burial practices, with the traditional churchyard burial ground giving way to the modern cemetery. The predominantly British settlers transplanted both institutions to the colonial context. The cemeteries, churchyards and burial grounds created in nineteenth century New Zealand were influenced by a great number of factors. These included the materials available, the religious and ethnic make up of settler society, regionalism, economic ties, major events, political and social conditions, means of establishment and function.

These processes, events, and influences resulted in a rich yet neglected material culture of urupa, cemeteries, churchyards, burial grounds and lone graves which are today valuable components of our historic and cultural landscapes. Portions of this heritage have already been lost through decay and destruction. Neglect is now the major threat. Part of this neglect is due to the fact that we do not understand our cemeteries, what they show, how and why they have developed over time. Neglect is also engendered by cultural perceptions of what is valuable. While Maori regard urupa and burial places as toanga and sacred sites, Pakeha have tended to ignore their historic cemeteries. Such attitudes have been reflected and enforced by the policy of external agencies such as the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. New Zealand’s nineteenth century cemeteries have a great but under-utilised research potential, which it is important to recognise if we wish to preserve them.
Preface and Acknowledgments

"Even as the moon dies, and then, having bathed in the waters of life, returns to this world once more young and beautiful, so let the man die and revive." Such were the words of Tane, offspring of Rangi, the Sky Father, and Papa, the Earth Mother, to Hine-te-Po, Goddess of Death and Hades. But Hine of the Dark World said, "Not so. Rather let man die and return to Mother Earth, even that he may be mourned and wept for." ¹

It is because of death that we have cemeteries. Despite this grim reason for their existence cemeteries are wonderful places for the living too. Even though many of the people who now rest under mouldering stones are no longer "mourned and wept for", the hundreds of historic cemeteries and burial places which can be found throughout New Zealand remain fascinating sites. I hope this thesis will contribute to an appreciation of the many nineteenth and early twentieth century cemeteries which dot our landscape. Richard Meyer asks, "Why study cemeteries and gravemarkers at all? For the same reasons, in essence, that we value and study all artefacts which embody lasting cultural truths: to help us achieve a better understanding of ourselves — what we are, what we have been, and, perhaps, what we are in the process of becoming." ² Cemeteries are valuable as places of cultural enrichment.

This thesis originally intended to posit of theoretical model for the interpretation of the historic New Zealand cemetery. This was all well and good until I realised that nobody in New Zealand really seemed to know what the historic cemetery was and how the cemetery had developed in this country. Sure, anyone could point out an old cemetery, but no one seemed to know why it looked like it does, what it reflects, how intertwined it is with wider historic landscapes, and with people, places, events. While many individual histories of cemeteries have been written over the years, none of these fit within a larger picture of cemetery development in this country. This larger picture is what I have created.

Now, to remember the living, who were as important as the dead in assisting me in my study. Thankyou firstly to the Scholarships Office, University of Otago for their generous grant, without which I would not have gone on to do my M.A. Thankyou to my supervisors Alex Trapeznik and Barbara Brookes for your proofreading and ideas. Thankyou to Stewart Harvey, of the Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand, for his help and sources. Thankyou to Lauren for sharing the good, and not so good, times which the past year and a half has brought. Not so much thanks for making me read your drafts. Thankyou to Elizabeth for her (occasionally) useful and (always) humorous assistance. Thankyou to Mike, Alice and Lucy for Quiz Night at the Outback and making sure we always went to bed on Monday nights slightly drunk. Thankyou to all of the staff who dealt with my morbid requests at the Alexander Turnbull, National and Hocken Libraries. Last but not least, thanks to my parents who, although they may not have always understood what exactly I was doing, always supported me anyway.


Note: Title page illustration: Karori Cemetery, Wellington 1895.

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<th>English Translation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ariki</td>
<td>first-born, chief, priest, leader*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atua</td>
<td>God, demon, supernatural being, ghost*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haehae</td>
<td>ritual slashing of the body, usually arms and torso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hahunga</td>
<td>the exhumation of the dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hapu</td>
<td>section of a large tribe*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hau</td>
<td>breath*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaupapa</td>
<td>theme, topic, subject, method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kokowai</td>
<td>red ochre*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mana whenua</td>
<td>from the bowels of the earth*, mana in the land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mate</td>
<td>dead, sick*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ora</td>
<td>alive, well*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papa tupapaku</td>
<td>bone chest, in which bones were placed after being scraped.* The spellings vary: papatupapaku and papatuupaaku. Also applies to larger mortuary structures or mausoleums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Po</td>
<td>night, place of departed spirits*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangatira</td>
<td>individual of high rank; for example, a chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangata whenua</td>
<td>people of the land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangihanga</td>
<td>mourning and funeral rituals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taonga</td>
<td>treasures, things of value to Maori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tapu</td>
<td>under religious or superstitious restriction*, sacred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tikanga</td>
<td>custom*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tohunga</td>
<td>skilled person, wizard, priest*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toma tupaku</td>
<td>caves or chasms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tupuna</td>
<td>ancestor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Urupa:</td>
<td>burial ground or place, cemetery</td>
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<td>Wahi tapu:</td>
<td>sacred place or area with restricted access, often an urupa. Also refers to a specific type of mortuary structure used to hold the tapu garments and possessions of the deceased</td>
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<td>Wairua:</td>
<td>spirit*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wai whakaheke tupapaku:</td>
<td>tapu bodies of water used for burial of human remains</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whakapapa:</td>
<td>genealogy, means by which Maori tie themselves to the landscape and enhance their mana</td>
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Note: Maori spellings use neither macrons or double vowels, except when quoted.

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Introduction

New Zealand’s Nineteenth Century Urupa, Burial Grounds, and Cemeteries

Death is a universal human experience, and the act of memorialisation is an integral part of almost every culture. In New Zealand, urupa, burial grounds and cemeteries have been part of the cultural landscape for almost 1000 years. Ubiquitous, yet often ignored, historic cemeteries dot the country-side, sometimes near a small town, church or marae. They lie abandoned in the inner city, frequented by joggers and the curious. Their existence is taken for granted, and we rarely stop to consider the processes and influences which shaped these landscapes of the dead. But whether well tended or not, they are all valuable and fragile pieces of our national heritage, providing valuable links to our past, commemorating the lives of ordinary, and not so ordinary, people.

In America, John Brown has observed that “while we as a society were not looking, monuments that seemed permanent have begun to disintegrate and be destroyed.”¹ The same situation exists in New Zealand, for despite an increased interest in our built heritage, our historic burial grounds remain a neglected part of the historic and cultural landscape of New Zealand. While significant buildings and sites are readily identified, classified and interpreted, cemeteries of equal historic and architectural value often remain neglected and vandalised. It is telling that the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (NZHPT) has no policy regarding the country’s historic burial grounds.

There are many reasons for this neglect. Quite simply, the geographical mobility of New Zealanders has meant that many people no longer live near the cemeteries containing their ancestors’ graves. Time also removes those people for whom graves had personal meaning. New Zealand’s nineteenth century cemeteries are also at risk from differences between attitudes toward Maori and Pakeha heritage.

For Maori, the burial ground or urupa retains great significance as taonga in a culture and society which values tupuna, whakapapa and a spiritual connection with the land. For Pakeha, the historic cemetery may represent a wasteful use of land, which could be turned to more profitable uses. In relation to the Bolton Street Cemetery in Wellington, Margaret Alington argued that “in a growing city, it may not always be feasible to keep several acres for the exact purpose specified on the original town plan.”

During the latter twentieth century several nineteenth century cemeteries were partially or wholly removed. Such actions are consistent with the Pakeha propensity to undervalue that which cannot ‘pay its way’.

The tendency to value built heritage which can be turned to making a profit has been enforced by the focus, promoted by the NZHPT since 1970s, on the ‘adaptive reuse’ of heritage structures. Whereas a historic house or building may be adapted for a number of purposes while retaining significant heritage features, cemeteries tend not to lend themselves easily to adaptive reuse without major changes which compromise their historic, cultural, and aesthetic values. They are, therefore, not economically viable. The conservation and upkeep of the cemetery, and restoration of individual graves, can have large monetary costs which are often considered unjustifiable by local governments. Earlier this year the *New Zealand Herald* caustically noted that:

> In all the drama surrounding Auckland City’s decision to spend $2 million on a memorial to Sir Peter Blake, you probably missed the paltry $100,000 of petty cash councillors scraped together for urgent repairs to the last resting place of the city’s pioneering heroes.  

The same columnist asked “where else in the world would the grave of the ‘maker of the nation’ [Governor Hobson] lie in such neglected surroundings. Anywhere else it would be a major tourist attraction.”

Victoria Lawrence argues that the ownership of the cemetery presents a paradox which is partially responsible for the deplorable state of many, as “it represents both the aggregate community, and the final resting place of the

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4 Ibid.
individual.” 5 Although civic authorities often hold ownership of the cemetery, each separate plot is bought and ‘owned’ by the family or friends of those who rest there. The plot is therefore a private responsibility, while general cemetery maintenance falls on the civic authority. The problem is that, although sold as private property many New Zealanders regard the maintenance of graves as a council responsibility, 6 while local bodies regard the upkeep of individual graves as a family duty. The Dunedin City Council Cemeteries Manager Mick Reece claims that the Council “is looking after its estate... but it’s a quantum leap to looking after the estate of private individuals.” 7 But our heritage is inherently collective, and cemeteries, more than anything, convey what James Curl calls “an ever present visual memorial of our collective past.” 8 They are a shared responsibility in which the public must to take more of an interest.

Cemeteries present difficulties in interpretation not always presented by historic buildings. Their ability to tell us about the past and the people who were our ancestors is not always so apparent as it is in a house museum or museum display. Their importance as historic landscapes, or as part of larger historic/cultural landscapes with an ability to inform us of nineteenth century land settlement patterns in New Zealand is also not always understood, particularly as thinking of heritage in terms of landscapes is a relatively new phenomenon.

Another reason for neglect is the narrow definition of heritage which has existed in New Zealand until very recently. Like industrial and humble domestic structures, cemeteries have suffered from the focus on our elite built heritage, which has traditionally been encouraged by the NZHPT and its emphasis on registering fine houses and handsome public buildings designed by eminent architects. The recent Dunedin City Council Heritage Issues and Options Report recognised that cemeteries are not commonly regarded as heritage places. 9 It is imperative to recognise that heritage places in the built environment can be other than buildings, and that our

7 Otago Daily Times, 23 October 1999, p.73.
8 James Curl, The Victorian Celebration of Death (London: David & Charles, 1972), 188.
historic cemeteries are very important components of New Zealand's heritage landscapes. They are also a valuable record of past peoples, whose memory is not always preserved elsewhere in the built environment. Recognising cemeteries as heritage places can, therefore, help remedy the unbalanced view of the past created by an emphasis on elite heritage structures.

In Australia concepts of heritage have been "widened to take in manifestations of many decidedly non-bourgeois ways of life."\(^{10}\) Griffin, in his study of death in Australia, recognises that the historic cemetery is significant for its record of everyday people. He argues that:

> Most of the inscriptions, of course, simply record the facts of life and death of ordinary people going about their unremarkable business, but they are none the less important for that.\(^{11}\)

Wider notions of what constitutes heritage must also be accepted in New Zealand in order for our historic cemeteries to be valued as records of the mundane.

The neglect which threatens the historic New Zealand cemetery is also due simply to the fact that the meanings and significance of our historic cemeteries are not understood. As James Curl pointed out over thirty years ago in England:

> The cemeteries are in danger, for we no longer understand them. They have passed into the realms of the fabulous, and, as such, are embarrassing to our society because they actually exist.\(^{12}\)

Part of this neglect is, therefore, due not to lack of interest, but rather a lack of an understanding of the beliefs, events and influences which shaped our historic burial grounds. Howard Colvin has observed that:

> Much of what we admire today in the art and architecture of the past owes its existence to motives, sentiments and beliefs that are alien and even repugnant to modern thinking.\(^{13}\)

We need to understand from where our cemeteries have come, what they reflect about our history and society, and what they mean to us today. The neglect of the cemetery

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\(^{11}\) Graeme Griffin and Des Tobin, *In the Midst of Life: The Australian Response to Death* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1982), 54.

\(^{12}\) Curl, 180.

in practice is, I believe, symptomatic of the general neglect of the history of New Zealand’s material culture, which has been noted by Jock Phillips. In New Zealand’s sesquicentennial year Phillips observed that “the gaps in the history of [New Zealand’s] material culture are large.”\textsuperscript{14} The lack of literature means New Zealanders have little information on ways of life in the past. This situation is changing. New Zealand’s historic buildings and houses have in the past two decades, for example, come to be seen as valuable components of the national estate. This change in attitude has been encouraged by, and reflected in, the growth of literature dealing with these topics.

My thesis proposes that the urupa, burial grounds and cemeteries created in New Zealand during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were distinct products of time, people and place. The bulk of the thesis will examine the forces and influences behind the development of the cemetery in nineteenth century New Zealand, and includes an analysis of the material culture which has resulted from these influences and processes. Richard Meyer argues that “Some of the most rewarding past investigations of American cemeteries and gravemarkers have involved consideration of the various origins and influences which were predominant in creating these cultural landscapes as they exist today”.\textsuperscript{15} This thesis will examine how society, religion, ethnicity, major events, occupational and economic ties, international developments, legislation, ideology, medical notions, uses, and attitudes shaped those urupa, cemeteries and burial grounds which today form such important parts of New Zealand’s cultural and historic landscape. The first part of the thesis will, then, analyse the development of the cemetery in New Zealand. Although urupa, burial grounds and churchyards are all discussed, the primary focus of this study is the cemetery.\textsuperscript{16}


\textsuperscript{16} Urupa refers to any form of Maori burial place; churchyard burial grounds, to which I generally refer as churchyards are located around churches. The term ‘burial ground’ I use to refer to the early burial places established by Europeans in New Zealand. The term burial ground was contemporary with early immigration to New Zealand, and was used by settlers to describe early burial places. Although there may seem to be little difference between cemeteries and burial grounds, cemeteries were products of modern ideas relating to burial, and are only present in New Zealand after 1840.
My thesis is limited to the study of New Zealand's nineteenth and early twentieth century urupa, burial grounds, churchyards and cemeteries. Prior to 1800, and for much of the period up to 1830, Maori burial practices remained free of European influences. Prehistoric Maori burial practices have been the topic of much anthropological/archaeological discussion in New Zealand, and it is not my aim to delve deeply into pre-contact practices and ideas, except to discuss their persistence and evolution in the nineteenth century with European contact. Maori burial practices in the nineteenth century, and the ways in which they developed and changed in response to Pakeha influences has not been the subject of scholarly dialogue. The same can be said in relation to Pakeha burial practices in the nineteenth century. It is generally imagined that the British settlers brought with them the idea of the cemetery, with its neat rows of headstones, which Maori then adopted. It was nothing so simple.

As part of the nineteenth century European transformation of the landscape of Aotearoa, in which Maori also participated, New Zealand's historic urupa, burial grounds and cemeteries are products of the melding of indigenous and introduced ideas and materials. Indigenous and introduced forms of memorialisation experienced both change and continuity. For Maori, ancient and traditional ideas and practices were retained in the face of momentous social change. Other practices were largely transformed with increased European contact during the nineteenth century and incorporated European technologies, while still retaining their roots in tikanga Maori. Some burial practices declined or were abandoned, while the imported material culture of death was appropriated. The burial practices and forms of material remembrance of the nineteenth century settlers were transplanted to Antipodean soil, often with adjustments and adaptations necessitated by attitudes and available materials in the new colonial society. Traditional British practices were reworked in available materials, while new practices evolved in response to the new environment. The theme of simultaneous change and continuity, therefore, for Maori and Pakeha alike, runs through the development of the cemetery in nineteenth century New Zealand.

My study ends in the early years of the twentieth century, around the First World War. The Great War is an appropriate upper boundary, marking the
beginnings of changes in thought and practices which ultimately transformed the way in which New Zealanders, particularly Pakeha, viewed death and expressed these attitudes through the material culture of the cemetery. In relation to Britain Michael Parker Pearson notes:

The First World War was a watershed between Victorian and ‘modern’ funerals. The massive scale of death, the government decision to not bring bodies home and the large number of unidentified corpses were major factors in bringing this about. Mourning clothes and elaborate processions became more and more unfashionable. Monuments became smaller and more regimented and more simple in decoration.\(^7\)

Other factors were also at work in New Zealand, including the egalitarian ideology of the Liberal Government.\(^8\) This is explained further in the thesis.

Since 1990, when Jock Phillips pointed out the great lack of history of New Zealand’s material culture and ways of life (and death), many works, from both within and without the academy, have been produced, detailing the ways in which New Zealanders have worked, played, dressed, and lived. A noticeable gap remains in the absence of any major work relating to death, burial and the cemetery in New Zealand. Margaret Alington’s thoroughly researched *Unquiet Earth: A History of the Bolton Street Cemetery*, Wellington (1978), is the only major publication relating to a cemetery in New Zealand. Perhaps this neglect is due to the topic, or to the tendency of the traditional historian to favour text over object. Whatever the case, it is a gap in New Zealand’s cultural history which needs addressing.

There have been calls overseas for the cemetery, in particular, to be included in social and cultural histories. In his epic account of the development of the cemetery in eighteenth century Paris, Richard Etlin urges that social histories should “include a serious consideration of the design of cities, parks, and cemeteries as an integral part of the story of an age.”\(^9\) This is because the cemetery did not simply


\(^8\) Phillip Edgar, “Ideological Choice in the Gravestones of Dunedin’s Southern Cemetery” ( M.A. Thesis, University of Otago, 1995) has examined this.

reflect the beliefs, values and practices of the society which created it but, as Etlin states, “Its architecture or its landscape also played a role in crystallizing nascent emotions and ideas.” The physical world in general, and the landscape of the cemetery in particular, both reflected and helped to formulate social and individual values. The value of such an approach has been demonstrated in part by Phillip Edgar, in his study of the headstones in Dunedin’s Southern Cemetery. Edgar concluded that headstones both reflected and encouraged the growth of egalitarian values in New Zealand colonial society. Ken Worpole’s *Last Landscapes: The Architecture of the Cemetery in the West* (2003) represents the latest contribution to this growing field. Unfortunately, his sweeping account of the development of the Western cemetery ignores Australasian developments and variations.

Britain’s many nineteenth century cemeteries have become recognised as valuable cultural and environmental resources. This is partly due to the stream of publications produced there since the 1970s such as *The Victorian Celebration of Death* by James Curl (1972), John Morley’s *Death, Heaven and the Victorians*, (1971), and *Mortal Remains: The History and Present State of the Victorian and Edwardian Cemetery*, (1989) by Chris Brooks. British works are invaluable for examining the practices relating to death and burial which were both consciously and unconsciously brought to New Zealand in the nineteenth century, particularly as British churchyards and cemeteries provided the model for many of New Zealand’s historic graveyards.

Australia is several steps ahead of New Zealand in the study of historic cemeteries and death in the nineteenth century. Celestina Sagazio has produced *Cemeteries: Our Heritage* (1992) which detailed the development of the cemetery in Victoria, relating the different types of cemetery to the people and history of the state. This provided a very useful model for this study because of the similarities between New Zealand and Australia, which are reflected in our burial grounds.

As well as works from different countries, literature produced by different disciplines was important, both in adding to the scant body of information produced

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20 Ibid., ix.
21 Ibid., xi.
by historians, and in gaining a wider perspective on the different values of the
cemetery and how these are interpreted. Archaeologists and anthropologists have
long been interested in the study of burial customs and the material culture associated
with death, and the study of historic cemeteries emerged within these disciplines in
America in the late 1960s. This research has culminated in *Cemeteries and
Containing essays by historians, cultural geographers, anthropologists, and folklorists,
it examines the development and significance of cemeteries in America through
different perspectives, approaches and disciplines. This was important in encouraging
the interdisciplinary flavour of my study, and in demonstrating how ethnicity, religion
and regionalism can influence and shape the landscape of the cemetery.

The closely related subject of death has, as opposed to the cemetery, received
much more attention. The cemetery is often mentioned in these works, as its form
and content are inseparable from attitudes toward death. One of the most important of
these is *The Hour of Our Death*, written by Philippe Aries, and translated from the
French into English in 1981. In this Aries chronicles attitudes toward death in the
western world over the past centuries, and the development of the churchyard and
cemetery in relation to the changes in attitude. The applicability of his model has,
however, been questioned both here and in Britain. Pat Jalland argues that the value
of Aries's work in Britain is limited by "his emphasis on the paradigmatic experience
of Catholic France" which fails to evaluate the impact of Protestantism.22 Phillip
Cleaver, in his study of Pakeha attitudes toward death in nineteenth and early
twentieth century Wellington, observes that the heavy reliance on French sources
means that Aries may be "overly presumptuous" to suggest that his history of
attitudes towards death is relevant to the whole of the Western world.23 Cleaver has,
however, successfully applied Aries's model of death to the New Zealand context. In
this thesis I have remained guarded against the temptation of applying a foreign
experience of death and the cemetery in the nineteenth century, even those of
Australia and Britain, to colonial New Zealand.

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23 Phillip Cleaver, "The Pakeha Treatment of Death in 19th and Early 20th Century Wellington," Lecture
given to the Wellington Historical and Early Settlers' Association Inc, 1996, 2.
Despite the dearth of substantial published work concerning death and cemeteries, either individually or generally, in New Zealand, there is a diverse range of sources and materials both directly and indirectly touching on the cemetery in this country. The most common of these are histories of individual cemeteries written by local historians. They often contain a brief account of the establishment of the cemetery and biographical sketches of those buried there. Often voluntary or commissioned undertakings by local historical societies or other local bodies, such histories are useful in providing examples of the development of individual historic cemeteries, and provide a distinctive New Zealand flavour. As far as I am aware, however, there exist no individual histories of Maori urupa. One reason for this is that the location of many is kept secret to protect them from possible desecration. Another is that many nineteenth century urupa continue in use today, and their histories, if known, are likely to be communicated orally. Thirdly, urupa are not seen as features separate from the rest of the landscape. This contrasts with Pakeha attitudes toward history and heritage, whereby individual sites are often identified and singled out as having particular significance without reference to the surrounding context. Although Maori burial practices and attitudes toward death have been the focus of European observation since 1769, there are few published works. R. S. Oppenheim’s *Maori Death Customs* (1973) is the only work which deals with this topic in depth, placing Maori burial rituals within the context of the Maori worldview. There remains a gap, however, in the history of the development of Maori burial practices between the beginning of the nineteenth century and the present day, and the ways in which Maori appropriated and adapted the Pakeha material culture of death. In contrast, pre-historic Maori burials have been the focus of extensive archaeological investigations and nineteenth century accounts.

Several university theses have been written over the past decade illustrating the great potential of the New Zealand cemetery as a rewarding subject of study, such as Philip Edgar’s “Ideological Choice in the Gravestones of Dunedin’s Southern Cemetery”, Glyn Hurley’s “Symbols from the Cemetery: the archaeology of a faith in decline”, and Shaun Higgins’ “Reflections After Life: The social dimensions in Colonial Auckland’s Symonds Street Cemetery”. None of these, however, deal with the larger picture of the cemetery in New Zealand, and all are from an anthropological perspective. Nor are they part of a ‘public’ dialogue dealing with cemeteries.
Public discussion of historic New Zealand cemeteries has been largely restricted to the NZHPT magazine. This is another reason why cemeteries have not yet been the focus of scholarly attention. As Gavin McLean notes, “because the discussion of historic places is limited outside publications such as the Historic Places Trust’s *New Zealand Historic Places* (1983-) and few professional historians work in the heritage sector, its contribution to New Zealand historiography has so far been modest.” The general lack of history of New Zealand’s rich and varied material culture is reflected by the fact that it was not until 1997 when the *New Zealand Journal of History* contained its first article on historic places.

In this thesis I have employed a wide range of primary and secondary sources; published and unpublished, international and local. I have also attempted to synthesise traditional textual sources with objects and visual sources. Jock Phillips observed in 1990 “a continuing failure to employ the whole range of approaches open to the historian in order to evoke the history of a culture in all its richness – its smells, its tastes, its fashions, its rituals, its words.” Ten years later Fiona McKergow argued that “historians have yet to meet this challenge adequately. The record of material life in New Zealand is abundant and exciting, and remains an acutely underutilised resource in the writing of our social and cultural history.” I have used two sources not common to the traditional historian in order to ‘evoke the history of a culture’: the cemeteries themselves and visual evidence.

Field research was vital in this exercise as the burial grounds and cemeteries themselves were rich sources of information on the beliefs, tastes and values of their creators. Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery argue that:

Too seldom we use the artefacts that make up our environment to understand the past. Too seldom do we try to read objects as we read books – to understand the people and the times that created them, used

25 This was David Hamer, “Historic Preservation in Urban New Zealand: An Historian’s Perspective”, *New Zealand Journal Of History* 31, no. 2, (October 1997).
them, and discarded them. In part this is because it is not easy to read history from things. They are illegible to those who know how to read only writing. They are mute to those who listen only for pronouncements from the past.²⁸

Of course, artefacts cannot be used to answer every historical question, and often require the support of relevant traditional written sources. Context is also important. The advantage of such an approach, where suitable, claims Kenneth Ames, "is access to cultural values not expressed verbally."²⁹ Objects and physical evidence such as headstones and cemeteries also "enable and enrich the historical imagination in ways quite distinct from conventional forms of evidence."³⁰ Cemeteries, where history and time are almost palpable, satisfy what McKergow calls "an urge for historical immediacy."³¹ Including material culture in the range of sources utilised by historians can overcome biases in textual sources. Their own burial practices and memorials were rarely the subject of Pakeha written documents. While early nineteenth century Maori practices attracted much attention for their exotic, and sometimes gruesome nature, how contemporary Europeans in New Zealand buried and remembered their dead is less well recorded. The material culture of the nineteenth century cemeteries I visited provided qualitative information, which was supported by the use of written and visual sources.

Photographs, which have only recently been recognised as important historical sources and not mere illustrations, were also valuable sources. This was particularly so as New Zealand's nineteenth century burial grounds have often changed a good deal in the past 100 years. Many monuments and fences have decayed and been removed over the years, while trees have matured, and other features added or subtracted. Many of my images came from the Alexander Turnbull Library, which possesses an impressive collection of nineteenth and early twentieth century photographs and nineteenth century watercolours and drawings.

²⁹ Kenneth Ames, quoted in McKergow, 165.
³⁰ McKergow, 165.
³¹ Ibid., 163.
Primary research was essential in view of the fact that the cemetery in New Zealand remains a neglected area of study. Sources were diverse, including individual cemetery records, letters, undertaker’s registers, government Acts, and ephemera such as notices, mourning cards and advertisements. Newspapers were particularly valuable and rich sources of information on the ways in which New Zealanders established and regarded their burial grounds in the nineteenth century.

Case studies have been used to illustrate the development of different types of burial places in nineteenth century New Zealand, such as the churchyard, or large municipal cemetery. Individual case studies highlight the various factors which shaped the landscapes of our cemeteries. These case studies utilised varying combinations of primary, secondary and visual sources and field study.

I am aware the time period I have used (post-contact up until the First World War) is an essentially European creation, and that the chronological structure of my thesis may savour of the ‘Grand or Master Narrative’ of New Zealand history. This narrative, Donald Harman Akenson observes, “begins with James Cook, runs through early whalers, missionaries and traders, then on, via successive waves of settlers, the various ethnic groups fusing into one nation (the crucible of World War 1 is often taken as the turning point), and culminating with unfettered national independence in 1947.” 32 Far from wishing to construct some narrative which ignores the diversity of experience in New Zealand, I have attempted to take some account of the current vogue for ‘ethnic’ histories in New Zealand, which follows trends in recent British historiography. Akenson notes that “Historiography in the main Pakeha homelands has entirely disaggregated”, with Welsh, Irish, Scottish and English histories, or even smaller regional histories becoming the norm. 33 Rather than emphasise a homogenous ‘Britishness’ Akenson wrote in 2002 that:

I strongly suspect that the next generation of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Pakeha historians will move sharply in the other direction, emphasising the factionalism, the tessellation, and especially the ethnic and religious fractures of the time. 34

33 Ibid., 189.
34 Ibid., 188-189.
I have also taken into consideration these “ethnic and religious fractures” in influencing the development of the cemetery in nineteenth century New Zealand.\textsuperscript{35} Akenson argues that the “individuation and assertion of personality by ethnic and ethno-religious groups must be granted” to counter the Master Narrative.\textsuperscript{36} I have applied this not only to Pakeha, but have also attempted to retain an indigenous presence which acknowledges the fact that Maori were involved in the development of New Zealand’s nineteenth century burial grounds.\textsuperscript{37} I have also paid specific attention to the Chinese and Jewish communities of nineteenth century New Zealand. By doing this I hope to have avoided simply providing an account of ‘English’ burial practices being transplanted to New Zealand soil by English colonists. The Master Narrative also has a tendency to divorce developments in New Zealand from events in the rest of the world. In 1987 Edmund Bohan observed “a new and sterile nationalism in the ascendant that regarded New Zealand as somehow unique, outside the ebb and flow of international developments.”\textsuperscript{38} International developments and their influence on New Zealand’s historic cemeteries and burial grounds have also been taken into account.

These international developments are largely contained in Chapter One, which examines the evolution of the cemetery in the West from ancient times to the present day. This sets the historic New Zealand cemetery within an international context of cemetery development. The focus lies particularly on the French, American and British cemeteries from the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as these places exerted the greatest external influence in shaping New Zealand’s nineteenth century cemeteries.

\textsuperscript{35} Although the fact remains that British, and in particular English, cemeteries exerted the greatest influence over the creation and design of many of New Zealand’s nineteenth century burial grounds.
\textsuperscript{36} Akenson, 190.
\textsuperscript{37} Incorporating a Maori aspect can have difficulties for the Pakeha scholar, as Michael Reilly notes: “The use of Maori language and a greater Maori cultural orientation within New Zealand history writing raise challenges for those reared within the Western historiographical tradition. Te taha wairua, the spiritual domain, has always played a critical role in many Maori narratives; it is a contribution many Westernised secular scholars might find difficult to integrate successfully into their own discourse.” Michael Reilly, “Imagining Our Pasts: Writing Our Histories,” in Fragments: New Zealand Social and Cultural History, eds. Bronwyn Dalley and Bronwyn Labrum (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2000), 27.
\textsuperscript{38} Edmund Bohan, “A recollection of the unfortunate failings of my countrymen’: The Irish in New Zealand Politic, 1860-1880,” in The Irish in New Zealand: Historical Contexts and Perspectives, ed. Brad Patterson (Wellington: Victoria University of Wellington, 2002), 64.
Chapters Two, Three and Four examine the cultural, social and historical contexts and influences which shaped the development of the New Zealand cemetery from the period of contact up until World War One. Chapter Two begins with a discussion of Maori burial practices at the time of European contact, relating these practices to the Maori world view. The impact of increasing interaction between Maori and European agents of contact from 1769 and especially after 1814 is then analysed with a particular focus on early whaling, trading, settler and missionary influence, and the resultant changes in Maori society and their world view. Early European burials in New Zealand are also discussed.

Chapter Three begins in 1840, when the idea of the cemetery, as distinct from Maori and early European burial grounds, and churchyards, was first imposed on the New Zealand landscape through the Wellington town plan, which made provision for the burial of the new systematic immigrants in a public “cemetry”. The beginning of formal settlement also began the mass importation of English, Scottish and Irish cultural practices, including the new ideas regarding cemeteries which were emerging in the early nineteenth century, as well as established customs relating to death and burial. This chapter examines the influences of ethnicity, religion, gender and class, individualism and the family in colonial New Zealand on cemetery design and use. Further changes to Maori burial practices are also discussed. Historical events and economic processes such as the gold rushes of the 1860s are examined with particular regard to the introduction of new ethnic and ethno-religious groups such as the Chinese and Jews, whose presence in this country is reflected in our historic burial grounds. Chapter Four continues the analysis of the influences and factors which shaped our burial grounds in the nineteenth century, focusing primarily on legislation, the ways in which cemeteries were established, and the uses of and attitudes toward the cemetery in nineteenth century New Zealand.

Chapter Five examines the material culture of the historic New Zealand cemetery, and analyses the physical result of the history and influences and processes examined in Chapters One, Two, Three and Four. This includes an identification of the various types of cemetery which developed in nineteenth century New Zealand, and a discussion of the individual components of these landscapes, including the
layout and design, fences, paths, plantings, headstones, epitaphs, associated buildings, and sectarian divisions, which can be found in these burial places.

The sixth and final chapter is composed of three parts. The first focuses on the ways in which the nineteenth century cemetery is regarded by contemporary New Zealanders, and examines cultural, external agency and academic perspectives. The second part analyses the value of the material culture of the cemetery in historical research. As a methodology for interpreting the cemetery and using it as a source this promotes an understanding of the significance of the historic cemeteries which are an integral part of the cultural landscape New Zealanders inhabit. The third part proposes some basic ways in which this endangered material resource can be maintained for future generations. This is not about explaining practical methods of stone conservation, although a greater understanding and appreciation of our cemeteries will assist in the very important aim of conserving the physical. First, however, we must step back a few centuries and shift our focus to the other side of the world.
Chapter One

Consumptive Churchyards and Salubrious Cemeteries: The Development of the Cemetery in the West

Funerary monuments have long been features of the landscapes we create and inhabit. In the effort to avoid the apparent oblivion occasioned by death countless memorials of varying size, shape and material have been erected. As Howard Colvin argues, “man has known few greater stimuli to architectural and artistic creativity than the attempt to transcend his own mortality.”¹ The cemetery is also a response to a practical necessity: the disposal of the body. Michael Ragon argues that:

From earliest times men have been concerned to preserve two things: the structure of the body (the skeleton) and its motive force (the soul). If the soul, having escaped from the body, had a life of its own, which could be kept going by religious observance, what could be done, on the other hand, with that now empty, cumbersome body, which, once the soul has departed, soon begins to decompose and stink?²

The cemetery as we know it today, however, is a relatively recent phenomenon, dating from the nineteenth century. This chapter will provide an account of the development of the cemetery in the Western world from ancient times to the present day. The main focus is on the decline of the churchyard and the triumph of the cemetery in France and Britain during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The time in which New Zealand was colonised, and the country which colonised it, were crucial factors in determining what form burial grounds took in this country in the nineteenth century. This chapter serves the joint purpose of examining many of the influences which shaped the development of the cemetery in nineteenth century New Zealand, and also sets this country’s nineteenth century burial places in an international context of cemetery development and history.

Today, the earliest surviving structures which we can recognise as architecture were funerary monuments.³ Built by the Neolithic civilisation in vast numbers across

¹ Colvin, ix.
³ Colvin, 1.
Figure 1. A parish church and churchyard, Nottinghamshire, England. The parish churchyard was the only place of burial in Britain for over 1000 years, and such places were at the physical and spiritual heart of the community

Western Europe, many took the form of earth mounds, or tumuli, which could reach vast proportions. During the first millennium BC in Greece these evolved into highly expressive stone structures.\(^4\) Two other important developments in funerary architecture accompanied this transformation. One was the emergence of the architectural monument. The other was the spread of the *stele* or inscribed gravestone. On these gravestones were carved the names of the dead and sculptured reliefs recalling their manner of life or the circumstances of their death. In the *stele* Colvin recognises “the beginning of the personal commemorative monument in a form in which it was (with local variations) to spread throughout the Hellenistic world.”\(^5\) Burial within the walls of the city state was obviously undesirable, and there is evidence that it in Athens it was formally forbidden around 500 BC. Instead, the great majority of Greek citizens were buried in cemeteries adjacent to the roads leading out of their city. Roman towns and cities also followed this plan, although cremation was widely practised.

The spread and acceptance of Christianity, with its deeply held belief in the resurrection of the body, meant that burial become established as the preferred form of Christian funerary rite.\(^6\) By the sixth to seventh centuries, after a period of both cremation and burial, pagan cremation gave way to Christian burial with Christianity asserting itself as the religion of the Roman Empire.\(^7\) In 752 the Pope granted Saint Cuthbert permission to create burial grounds around churches in Britain.\(^8\) This was a very significant development, establishing churchyards as the normal place of burial in Britain and much of Europe for the next 1100 years (Figure 1).\(^9\) Typically, the wealthy were buried under the church floor, and the poorer outside. By the fourteenth century suicides, lunatics and murderers were often excluded from the churchyard.\(^10\) Burial in parish churchyards, Etlin argues, “helped to sustain a spiritual bond between

\(^{4}\) Ibid., 16.
\(^{5}\) Ibid.
\(^{6}\) Douglas J. Davies, *Death, Ritual and Belief* (London: Cassel, 1997), 103. Davies notes that there is debate over this claim. Also worthy of note is the fact that the reinstatement of cremation in the late nineteenth century was initially objected to by some because of its pagan associations.
\(^{7}\) Ibid., 104. It is important to remember that not all pagans had practised cremation.
\(^{9}\) The rationale behind being buried in or close to the church was to remain close to services and saints’ relics. Such a system of burial appealed to the medieval Christian mind, for on the day of Judgment it was thought that the closer one was to the saint’s relics the more chance one would have of catching the updraft the saint created on his way to heaven.
\(^{10}\) Ibid., 40.
parishioners and their ancestors as well as to direct thoughts toward the ultimate teachings of religion.”

The dead were both spiritually and physically present in the community.

With the popularity of the churchyard as a place of burial, the cemetery of antiquity disappeared. The “role of cemeteries”, Philippe Aries states:

declined and disappeared in the Middle Ages, when the tombs huddled against the churches or filled them. In urban topography, the cemetery is no longer visible; it has lost its identity. It merges with the outbuildings of the church and the public park. Gone are those long rows of monuments that extended in every direction from Roman towns like the points of a star.

The church and its accompanying burial ground were, however, vital elements of the urban landscape. Churchyard monuments were uncommon until the eighteenth century, and graveyards provided rare open space in crowded urban areas. The churchyard was as much a public square as a burial ground. During the Middle Ages and until well into the seventeenth century, argues Aries:

The cemetery served as a forum, public square, and mall, where all members of the parish could stroll, socialize, and assemble. Here they conducted their spiritual and temporal business, played their games, and carried on their love affairs.

With the dawn of the nineteenth century the cemetery reappeared in the Western landscape, when the transformation of the over-filled churchyards into carefully planned landscapes of the dead led to the reintroduction of the word ‘cemetery’, meaning a place of repose. By the eighteenth century Europe’s medieval churchyards were saturated with generations of corpses; a crisis point had been reached. Despite earlier reformations, states Colvin, “the state of churchyards in London, Paris and many other cities was by the eighteenth century shocking to both religious sentiment and to Enlightened opinion.” Reform came from Paris, where the Parlement ordered the urban burial grounds to be closed once and for all,

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13 Ibid., 64.
14 John Gary Brown, 4.
15 Colvin, 367.
beginning with the infamous Les Innocents in 1780. The evolution of the cemeteries which would replace the old urban churchyards from this time, argues Etlin, involved “the interplay between architectural and landscape design, social and cultural intentions, religious convictions, and commemorative gestures.”

The new cemeteries were to be sited on the periphery of urban areas, much like the cemeteries of Antiquity. The inspiration for this came from both the avid interest in the architecture of the classical world and from contemporary notions of disease. In the 1760s the procurator general of the community of Saint-Sulpice, when the decision to build a new burial ground near the Petit-Luxembourg was being discussed, warned that:

The fetid odour emitted from cadavers is a sign from Nature, who is warning us that they should be removed to a distance. Those peoples of antiquity who most excelled in public administration relegated their graves to isolated places.

The corpses decaying in the crowded churchyards and under the floors of the churches were, according to contemporary science, thought to corrupt the air and produce foul miasmas which transmitted disease. Voltaire reflected on the relationship between corpses and disease when he asked:

What, these people bury their dead in the same place where they worship Divinity? Their temples are paved with cadavers? No wonder that Persepolis [i.e., Paris] is ravaged so often by these pestilential diseases.

The new cemeteries were, therefore, influenced by the Enlightenment strictures of “cleanliness, order, air, light, and sunshine.” Not only were corpses seen as dangerous to human health, the dead were seen to defile the sacred purity of the church. In his *De l' Architecture* (1776), Jean-Francois Sobry encapsulated the sentiments of the entire movement when he wrote “This practice of burying inside our churches is both unhealthy and irreverent.”

There was also an increasing desire to separate the dead from the living in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for non-medical reasons. The words of Abbe

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16 Etlin, 39.
17 Aries, *The Hour of Our Death*, 480.
18 Voltaire, quoted in Etlin, 12.
19 Etlin, 12.
20 Jean-Francois Sobry, quoted in Etlin, 17.
Figure 2. The obelisk to General Wolfe at Stowe, England, c.1800.

Taken from Etlin, 195.

Figure 3. Lord Cobham's column at Stowe, England, c.1800.

Taken from Etlin, 195.
Lubersac reveal a wish of “removing from our view the dismal and crushing sights which constantly remind us of our nothingness.” The separation of the dead from the living, which so heavily shaped the new cemetery, was also part of what J. Roach called new “segregationist taxonomies of behaviour” in the related areas of manners and bodily administration. Under this new system, argues Roach:

the dead were compelled to withdraw from the spaces of the living...their bodies removed to newly dedicated and isolated cemeteries...As the place or burial was removed from local churchyard to distant park, the dead were more likely to be remembered (and forgotten) by monuments than by continued observances in which their spirits were invoked.

Contemporary with this separation of the living and the dead was a shift in the way people perceived death and mortality. “In the eighteenth century,” argues Etlin, “Western civilisation underwent a radical change with respect to attitudes towards death. A substantially medieval Christian theology was replaced by a pre-Romantic concept of human mortality.” A place and a focus of mourning were needed: these were supplied by the cemetery and the monument. The burial ground was now conceived of as a place to visit where relatives and friends liked to gather around the graves of their dead, and it was necessary to plan them according to this new function. This illustrates just how closely attitudes toward death are connected to the design and use of burial places.

These new ideas of what the cemetery should be fused with the emerging conception, by the closing decades of the eighteenth century, of the cemetery as a peaceful garden landscape. This new model of the cemetery was based on the landscape garden, which originated in England in the early eighteenth century, later spreading to the Continent. In the English landscape garden, accompanied as it was with the neoclassical taste for simplicity and classical architecture, classical monuments were an integral feature (Figures 2. and 3.). Etlin notes that “Christian Hirschfield credited the English with having introduced what had become the

21 Abbe Lubersac, quoted in Etlin, 17.
23 Ibid.
24 Etlin, ix.
25 Ibid., 163.
Figure 4. The first great western cemetery, Pere Lachaise, Paris, 1829.

Taken from Etlin, 349.

Figure 5. The Forest Pond, Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, Massachusetts. From *Mount Auburn Illustrated*, 1847.

Taken from Etlin, 362.
universal practice of erecting memorials in the form of urns, columns and buildings in the garden” in his *Theorie de l’art des jardins* of 1781. Throughout England large classical houses were built, set in expansive parks dotted with columns, obelisks, and temples dedicated to filial piety and pagan gods. Trees, which were so important in the landscape garden, were also integral to the new cemetery designs for religious, sentimental, picturesque and hygienic reasons. Etlin argues that the merging of the cemetery with the landscape garden took place in the minds of the garden theorists in the 1790s, when “the burial of Jean-Jacques Rousseau on the Ile des Peupliers in the landscape garden at Ermenonville fused together the example of the English garden with a sentimental pastoral vision found in painting and literature.” In France, by 1800, the cemetery was conceived of as a picturesque landscaped garden in which all citizens could commemorate according to their own taste or public fashion.

This image first found concrete expression in Pere Lachaise cemetery in Paris, opened in 1804 (Figure 4.). Built to replace the closed urban churchyards, it was then located outside the city. Etlin notes that “Pere Lachaise in Paris is perhaps the most famous in the Western world. Although the general public accepts its existence without much questioning, it actually represents a turning point in one thousand years of Western history.” The architect, Alexandre-Theodore Brongniart, envisaged a partly informal layout, with tombs and trees flanking winding paths. He conceived the new cemetery “as a sort of Elysian fields or rolling English garden in which beautiful monuments were dominated by greenery.” Pere Lachaise was carefully landscaped and planted with recognised funereal and ‘mournful’ plantings such as the yew, cypress, chestnut, lime and poplar. The cemetery Brongniart created was the archetype of the picturesque layout which came to dominate nineteenth century cemetery design in the West.

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26 Ibid., 175.
27 Joseph Priestly’s findings that trees purified the air were supported as the eighteenth century drew on.
28 Etlin, 197.
29 Ibid., 273.
30 Ibid., ix.
31 Colvin, 369.
32 Aries, *The Hour of Our Death*, 531.
Pere Lachaise also gave birth to other burial practices we now take for granted. The cemetery established private burial in perpetuity with a monument as the norm.²³ The use of the tombstone spread rapidly, and monuments dedicated to the individual now became common, with individual not common graves. The cemetery attracted much praise for its beauty as a “terrestrial paradise”, and it attracted many visitors. As a heaven on Earth Pere Lachaise provided a more immediate bliss, which, argues Etlin, “had little place for questions of sin, grace, or redemption.”³⁴ It “offered a sense of immortality by suggesting the sweetness of death and by sustaining the illusion of a continuing presence which bound the dead to their attentive survivors. All of this had little in common with Christian theology.”³⁵ It demonstrated the preoccupation with the mortality/immortality of the body, rather than the soul, in Romantic Europe. With Pere Lachaise and its successors, Aries argues “Paris passed expeditiously from a medieval geography of the cemetery...from the small courtyard of the local parish church to the large general cemetery.”³⁶ In the early nineteenth century, therefore, the cemetery reappeared in the topography of civilisation.³⁷

The Parisian model was adopted in Britain and the United States where overcrowding, epidemics blamed on burial-related miasmata, desecration of graves, and an increasing desire of communing with the dead in a natural and beautiful environment made Pere Lachaise an attractive model. The Glasgow Necropolis of 1832 was one of the most spectacular of those new cemeteries based on Pere Lachaise. Numerous others were constructed in both Britain and America, many by joint stock companies, and later by municipal authorities.

Although based on the Parisian model, the American rural cemetery developed away from the precedents set by Pere Lachaise. While at Pere-Lachaise Nature gave way before the profusion of Art, in the new American ‘rural’ cemeteries of the nineteenth century Art bowed before Nature. Called ‘rural’ cemeteries as a reflection of both their location on the edges of towns, and their ‘natural’ design, they were

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²³ Ibid., 518.
²⁴ Etlin, 357.
²⁵ Ibid.
²⁶ Aries, The Hour of Our Death, 496.
²⁷ Ibid., 476.
often larger with a greater focus on woodland and less on monuments. Less formal and more picturesque, they included carriage paths, dells and ponds. Individual iron railings were often restricted, to avoid cutting up the landscape into little parcels. The first of the rural cemeteries was Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge Massachusetts, opened in 1831 (Figure 5). Its picturesque landscape was completely unlike any existing American or British graveyard or churchyard, being what Blanche Linden-Ward describes as “a scenic composition of winding avenues, paths, and ponds on hilly, wooded terrain with dramatic panoramic views over the entire metropolitan area.” Mount Auburn was designed to elicit the “pleasures of melancholy”, appealing to contemporary romantic sensibilities. The names of these new American cemeteries are revealing, with ‘natural’ names such as Laurel Hill or Mount Auburn finding preference over more sombre titles used in Britain, such as the Liverpool or Glasgow Necropolis. These rural cemeteries were places to visit, reflect, learn, moralise, and regret. They were perfectly suited to the growing cult of the dead in western society, and the American cemetery evolved to look less like a churchyard and more like a garden. “Indeed,” notes Aries of Mount Auburn, “it has served as a model for city parks such as Central Park, in New York (1856).” The model of the rural cemetery was immediately adopted in America, and gradually in the home of its original inspiration, England.

In Britain, and in particular London, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, urban churchyards were in a disgusting condition. The urban expansion and increased urban population of the industrial revolution had burdened parish churchyards with an ever-increasing amount of dead. These churchyards had already been grossly over-crowded since the seventeenth century. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, explains Felix Barker, British “Graves not merely yawned; they belched. Fears that exposed and rotting corpses would spread disease compelled the Government to act.” In the hope of emulating Pere Lachaise, a Bill was passed in

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38 Etlin, 366. Unlike in New Zealand’s nineteenth century cemeteries, which were characterised by demarcated plots. This is discussed further in Chapters Three and Five.
39 Ibid., 357.
41 Aries, The Hour of Our Death, 533.
1832 "for Establishing a General cemetery for the Interment of the Dead in the Neighbourhood of the Metropolis." This became Kensal Green Cemetery north of Paddington and was the first of many company-owned cemeteries. Although the construction of cemeteries on the outskirts of British cities from the 1830s was part of the war against the insanitary conditions which existed, as well as being a response to new sentimental attitudes toward death, the modern cemetery in Britain began primarily as a profit-making venture.

There was money in death, and cemetery building became big business. Private joint stock companies, sometimes philanthropic but more often commercial, were formed with the sole purpose of profiting from the interment of the dead. The London Cemetery Company, which established the famous Highgate Cemetery in 1839, was one of these. At its first meeting it was estimated that its purchase of 17 acres for £3,500 would return £225,000: 30,000 graves, averaging three interments per grave at the lowest figure of £2 10s. These new cemeteries followed the French and American models to various degrees, being planned as large parks for the public to use as leisure areas in which the achievements of the dead were glorified, and consequently where the moral education of all classes could be improved. They represented a great cultural shift, as the dead were no longer buried at the centre of society and were removed from their immediate association with the Church. The joint stock public cemeteries were, however, "tainted by commerce, which was thought unbecoming in this context".

Despite these private ventures, the state of British churchyards was still dire, particularly in London. John Morley observes that "A typical metropolitan church, St Martin-in-the-Fields, had a burial ground of 200 feet square, which was estimated to contain 60,000 to 70,000 bodies." Such places were not secure resting grounds for Christian bodies awaiting the Resurrection, as bodies were routinely dug up by sextons in order to free up space. It was not until the 1850s that the British

44 1832 Cemetery Bill, quoted in Barker, 15.
46 Barker, 15.
47 Parker Pearson, "Mortuary Practice", 106.
49 Ibid., 35.
Government showed any desire to follow a Napoleonic example, and take on control of the provision and maintenance of burial grounds. As an alternative to the profit-making cemeteries, the *Metropolitan Interment Act* (1850) allowed for the provision of publicly-funded cemeteries in London.\(^{50}\) This established a Board of Health with the power to provide cemeteries.\(^{51}\) The Queen-in-Council could, on the advice of the Board, forbid further interments in churchyards and from 1852-62, 500 Orders-in-Council closed 4000 old burial grounds. By the 1850s, therefore, “urban churchyards had had their day. Over-full, exclusively Anglican, and suspected of being sinks of contamination, they were closed in large numbers over the next few years.”\(^{52}\) Intramural burial, or burial within churches, also came to an end. The Act was extended across the country in 1853 and into Scotland with the *Burial Grounds (Scotland) Act* (1855).\(^{53}\)

The closures and Acts ushered in a boom of cemetery building in Britain, at a time of increasing migration to New Zealand. From the 1860s onwards many new multi- or non-denominational cemeteries were established, not by private enterprise, but by public bodies.\(^{54}\) The Anglican Church did not attempt to found new burial grounds, a fact which also helped detach burial from the religious sphere of control. Colvin argues that:

> It was a characteristic feature of the new European cemeteries that they owed their existence to secular rather than to ecclesiastical initiative and were under the control of municipalities or boards rather than of the local clergy. Many of the cemeteries catered for religious denominations of all kinds and the officiating clergy came and went with the undertakers.\(^{55}\)

The design of the nineteenth century British cemetery tended towards a path between the French and American models, with neither monuments nor plantings dominating. Colvin notes, “In England, the original home of the landscape garden, there was no difficulty in assimilating the idea of the garden cemetery.”\(^{56}\) Pere Lachaise was very influential, with its combination of straight and winding paths,

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\(^{50}\) This followed on the heels of the *Public Health Act* (1848) which prohibited intra-mural burial.

\(^{51}\) Morley, 50.

\(^{52}\) “Paradise Preserved”, 9.


\(^{54}\) Curl, 157.

\(^{55}\) Colvin, 368.

\(^{56}\) Ibid., 370.
Figure 6. A “Design for laying Out and Planting a Cemetery on Hilly Ground” from Loudon’s influential 1843 publication exhibits many of the features of modern cemetery design, including sweeping drives, evergreens, a mortuary chapel and lodge.

Taken from John Morley, *Death, Heaven and the Victorians* (London: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), Figure. 84.
careful plantings and a profusion of monuments. The other main influence came in
the form of J. C. Loudon, a professional landscape gardener, who published a very
influential treatise on the design of cemeteries in 1843, entitled The Laying Out,
Planting, and Managing of Cemeteries, and on the Improvement of Churchyards.

Loudon’s approach was rational rather than romantic, and he disapproved of
cemeteries which bore “too great a resemblance to pleasure-grounds”. Although he
promoted a formal grid plan “his abundantly planted layouts were characteristic
products of the English tradition of landscape gardening”. The many cemeteries
created as a result of the 1853 Act were planned with either a picturesque layout or a
grid pattern, or a combination of the two. Sweeping drives, monuments and lines of
trees were integral features (Figure 6.). For Loudon, the main function of the
cemetery was as a place to dispose of corpses in a manner which would not injure the
living, either by affecting their health or by shocking their feelings or opinions. The
second object of the burial ground was the improvement of the “moral sentiments and
general tastes of all classes, and more especially of the great masses of society”. Victorian cemetery designers heavily exploited the moral and didactic value of the
cemetery. Loudon also argued that cemeteries should be conspicuous from a distance,
making them an “impressive memento of our mortality”. For this reason cemeteries
were often placed on hills.

Plantings were integral to both formal and picturesque cemetery design. Loudon promoted the use of traditional and melancholy plantings such as the yew and
cedar, and other evergreens. Michael Ragon observes:

Evergreen conifers and wood so hard that it was almost rot proof were
quite naturally chosen as symbols of immortality. The cedar, whose
longevity is exceptional, the box tree dedicated to Pluto, god of the
underworld, the cypress, whose branches were used on Greek and
Roman funeral pyres, soon became trees and shrubs dedicated to
death.

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57 Morley, 49.
58 Colvin, 370.
59 “Paradise Preserved”, 10.
60 Morley, 48.
61 J. C. Loudon, The Laying Out, Planting, and Managing of Cemeteries, and on the Improvement of
Churchyards, 1843, quoted in Morley, 48.
62 Ibid., 49.
63 Ragon, 113.
Figure 7. A British monument catalogue page from the late nineteenth century, illustrating the popular broken column and obelisk.

Figure 8. A nineteenth century American commemorative lithograph on which one could inscribe the name of the deceased, frame and hang in the drawing-room. The Roman-inspired stone and the urn were popular in mortuary architecture throughout the West, including New Zealand.

Taken from McDowell and Meyer, 12.
In Britain the yew was equivalent in significance to the Mediterranean cypress. In England in the Middle Ages parishes were compelled to plant yews to provide good wood for bows. Yew trees, therefore, had been an element in British churchyards for many centuries. In the eighteenth century elms and exotic cypresses and cedars were introduced. Picturesque cemetery design promoted the use of more varied plantings, including deciduous trees such as the oak. This led to a more park-like landscape, which naturally resulted from original inspiration by the English landscape garden of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

The monuments of the Victorian cemetery echoed the popular tastes and fashions of the era, and were often inspired by archaeological discoveries. "Eclecticism," Ragon observes, "which was fashionable for the architecture of the living, could not spare the dead." Individuality could be expressed if one had the inclination and the money, otherwise mass-produced memorials satisfied the tastes and aspirations of the middle and lower classes (Figure 7). Inspiration came from church tombs and architecture, and from antiquity with pyramids, obelisks, sarcophagi, columns, and urns proving popular (Figure 8). Ragon notes "Pastiche reigned supreme as in all the architecture of the time." This is particularly obvious in The Glasgow Necropolis, in which the author praises the fact that "every variety of order and style, from the simple grandeur of the Doric to the exquisite elegance of the Corinthian – from the massive Egyptian obelisk to the picturesque Gothic, the graceful Italian, and the formal yet fanciful Elizabethan" could be found in the cemetery. The new cemeteries provided room for everyone to have a monument expressive of individual taste. Colvin notes that:

Architects and others began to provide printed patterns for funerary monuments in various styles, and in every large cemetery in western Europe every variety of form, from the Egyptian to the Romanesque, from the Byzantine to the Gothic, from the baroque to the neoclassical, is to be found. Pyramids stand side by side with broken columns, Roman altars with Christian crosses. Nowhere is the

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64 Ibid., 113-114.
67 Ragon, 87.
68 Ibid., 88.
69 The Glasgow Necropolis, quoted in Morley, 53.
This eclecticism was enhanced by the use of many contrasting materials, including marble, granite, cast iron and terra-cotta.

The cemeteries of Scotland, as well as England, were transformed. Sometimes this change did not always meet with local approval. In his *Highland Notebook* of 1843 Robert Carruthers made it clear that he did not admire the new gravel walks and trees in burial grounds, believing that they conflicted with traditional Scottish habits and feelings. Despite this disapproval, Scottish cemeteries soon closely resembled their English counterparts. “Within the past few years”, Dean Ramsay noted with approval in 1871:

> cemeteries and churchyards are now as carefully ornamented in Scotland as in England with shrubs, flowers, turf, gravel walks, headstones, crosses etc. in freestone, marble and granite; ‘everlasting wreaths’ in keeping with French sentiment, are placed over graves as an emblem of immortality and in several Edinburgh cemeteries I have seen these enclosed in glass shades.

The relative homogeneity of British cemeteries was encouraged by the widespread dissemination and acceptance of modern forms of memorialisation and cemetery design, as well as the mass production of headstones and grave ornaments (Figure 7.).

The pagan character of the new cemeteries attracted much criticism from prominent members of the High Church movement within the Anglican Church. Morely notes that “Within the movement, religion and aesthetics seem to be inextricably mixed”. One of these men, Alfred Pugin, the leader of the medieval gothic architectural revival, condemned these pagan memorial forms as un-Christian. He argued that “Surely the Cross must be the most appropriate emblem on the tombs of those who profess to believe in God”, and expressed his disbelief of the fact that “the types of all modern sepulchral monuments should be essentially pagan”, such as the popular urns and broken pillars. The religious/aesthetic debate concentrated also

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70 Colvin, 373.
71 Gordon, 88-89.
72 Ibid., 89.
73 Morley, 52.
74 Pugin, quoted in Morley, 54.
on trees. Loudon listed about 500 trees suitable for cemeteries. The Quarterly Review, however, claimed that his list was more suitable for a select arboretum. They suggested the choice be limited to yews, hemlock-spruces, the cedar of Lebanon, the vine, fig tree, rose of Sharon, and Scots pine, and excluded the oak and the popular weeping willow, which it called a “modern sentimentalism, false as a Christian type.”

The nineteenth century cemetery was an expression of three important components of Victorian western, and in particular, British, society: the middle class, the family and the individual. The middle class gained increasing power and influence throughout the nineteenth century. With this came the desire to materially manifest one’s status and family heritage. This materialism became especially evident in the cemetery with the construction of the family tomb. Property and the family and individual grave became important in nineteenth century in Britain as the middle class pursued its bourgeois dreams. One of these was a secure family grave, not the “parish charnel heap.” Ragon argues that the nineteenth century family tomb was “a bourgeois form of expression certainly.” It imitated the nobility in its expression of the homogeneity and immortality of the family name, and “It was no longer the soul that was indestructible, but the family, the name.” In Montparnasse cemetery in Paris there is even a family vault for 100 places. In the new cemeteries “Hereditary ownership of the grave...was extended to the whole middle class. The monument, which had been the exception, became the rule.”

If the nineteenth century cemetery represented the triumph of the Victorian family, it was also a victory for individualism. Edmund Gillon notes that “The Victorians, with their great sense of the personal, felt that individual achievement should be recognised.” As Peggy McDowell and Richard Meyer observe:

In the nineteenth century ... with the advent of radical social and political reform and the concomitant rise of the individual and

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75 The Quarterly Review, quoted in Morley, 49.
76 Curl, 25.
77 Ragon, 87.
78 Ibid.
79 Aries, The Hour of Our Death, 518.
individuality, there was an increase of interest in commemorative arts amongst all levels of society.\textsuperscript{81}

The grave memorial was the most common expression of this new interest, and the desire to be personally remembered, rather than be subsumed in the crowded anonymity of the churchyard. The trend towards increasing memorialisation was “prompted by a political and philosophical climate that emphasised the innate worth of the individual, a climate, one might argue, that was actively encouraged by the new democratic governments in Europe as well as in America and by attitudes born out of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century concepts associated with Romanticism.”\textsuperscript{82}

Related to this, Ragon argues that the Victorian:

funerary monument, however ridiculous it may be, appears nevertheless as an unquestionable democratic conquest. From the monument for the king to the monument for all, the development of the funerary site corresponds to other mass phenomena. The right to a burial vault parallels the right to housing. The urban cemetery-museum grew up with the claim to political rights.\textsuperscript{83}

The triumph of individuality meant that now a vast number of people had their lives immortalised in stone. The new cemeteries did not merely coincide with the Victorian cult of individualism; they were one of its products and assisted in enforcing its values.

Despite the pagan appearance of many nineteenth century cemeteries, and the often worldly motivations behind the desire for burial, these new public cemeteries still owed their existence, at least in part, to widely held religious belief. Morley argues “It is not possible to understand how passionately the Victorians concerned themselves about the decent disposal of human corpses without a hint of the theological basis on which their solicitude rested.”\textsuperscript{84} For many people in the nineteenth century the chief glory and hope of Christianity was the doctrine of the resurrection of the body.\textsuperscript{85} It was necessary to have a secure repository for bodies; the churchyards had eventually failed in this purpose, but the new cemeteries would not.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{83} Ragon, 84.
\textsuperscript{84} Morley, 32.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
During the nineteenth century the cemetery once again came to occupy a place in the life of the city, both physical and moral, which it had occupied throughout Antiquity, but had lost in the early Middle Ages. The word ‘cemetery’ came into common usage, distinguishing these new burial grounds from churchyards and graveyards. Rich and poor alike were brought together in a common landscape of the dead and cemeteries became once more a characteristic suburban feature. Burial had been largely divorced from the Church, destroying the link between patronal saint and place of burial which had influenced the topography of so many European towns in the past thousand years. The new cemeteries also ended the almost symbiotic relationship between the dead and the living which Colvin argues “had been for so long one of the basic expressions of Christian piety.

Although the new Parisian, American, and British cemeteries were to be located outside of the city, they were not to be shunned. Unlike cemeteries today, they exercised an important role in the spiritual and cultural life of the community. Largely this was because the “public cemetery [became] the focus of all piety for the dead.” The nineteenth century was the era of the visit to the cemetery, as the grave and its monument became what Aries calls “the privileged place of memory and regret.” It was also visited for its didactic and moral qualities, its recreational facilities, and role as a gallery of art and of nature. Through the nineteenth century the cemetery occupied an important place in the physical and spiritual life of the community. Indeed, Etlin goes so far as to argue that “the city did not seem to be a viable social organism without the proximity of the cemetery.”

Today, however, cemeteries have been banished from our cities. New cemeteries and crematoria are constructed far from urban centres, while the nineteenth century cemeteries lie neglected and forgotten. As Colvin notes:

In Britain the triumph of the cemetery in its nineteenth-century form has been relatively short-lived. Death is no longer an event to be celebrated by major ceremonial, the grave is no longer a place to be

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87 Colvin, 368.
88 Ibid., 368-369.
89 Aries, *The Hour of Our Death*, 524.
90 Ibid., 530.
91 Etlin, 368.
marked by substantial architectural or sculptural monuments. Indeed, many nineteenth-century British cemeteries lie neglected, vandalised and overgrown.92

Our attitude toward the historic cemetery is closely related to our attitude toward death. As we shun death, we ignore the cemetery. Aries argues that “The beginning of the twentieth century saw the completion of the psychological mechanism that removed death from society, eliminated its character of public ceremony, and made it a private act.”93 The cemetery, like death, has also become ‘regulated’ and removed from society. The Edwardian period saw the ‘Great Age of Death’ pass its zenith, with a simplification of burial and mourning customs.94 The mass death of World War I confirmed this tendency. The simple and restrained cemeteries and memorials of the Imperial War Graves Commission provided a model for a new style of remembrance.95 Gone was that which Colvin labelled the “stylistic anarchy” typical of the nineteenth century cemetery.96 Standard grid patterns became the norm, especially when lawn cemeteries were introduced in the second half of the twentieth century, with memorial stones set flat into the grass, providing a large expanse of easily maintained lawn. The desire for simplicity has created a lack of ostentation in death among all classes of society. Victorian conspicuous consumption in all areas of life, including death, has become unfashionable. Pearson argues that “Cemeteries have outlived their Victorian function as leisure amenities for the display of the achievements of the dead and have become storage areas or the disposal of dead bodies; graves are tightly packed in well regimented ranks”.97

The trend towards simplicity in the twentieth and twenty-first century cemetery has also been assisted by the dramatic increase in popularity which cremation has enjoyed. Cremation has had a great impact on the cemetery, rendering the plot unnecessary. The Cremation Society of England was founded by Sir Henry

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92 Colvin, 374.
93 Aries, The Hour of Our Death, 575.
94 “Paradise Preserved”, 10.
95 More than a million men from all parts of the British Empire lost their lives in the First World War. The Imperial War Graves Commission came into being in May 1917 to care for their graves and to commemorate the missing. Individual stone headstones were used of a simple design: the headstones were of uniform height and width (2 feet 6 inches high and half as wide) and slightly curved at the top. Herbert Wood and John Swittenham, Silent Witnesses (Toronto: Canadian War Museums Historical Publications, 1974), 5-9.
96 Colvin, 373.
Thompson, Surgeon to Queen Victoria, in 1874. The first crematorium was built at Woking in 1885, in which year there were three cremations. By 1968 over half of those who died in Britain were cremated. This trend has had an inhibiting effect on the architecture of the cemetery, for, without a body around which to build the grave or tomb, Ken Worpole argues that “there is nothing else to do but retreat to a kind of polite formalism.” This has resulted in the neatly ordered rose gardens of remembrance and columbaria which are incapable “of possessing the moral power of the grave or tomb, let alone the monumental landscaped cemetery.”

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the normal place of burial for those in Britain and Europe was the parish churchyard. This had been the pattern for the previous thousand years. By the dawn of the nineteenth century the cemetery reappeared: as a fusion of scientific notions of disease, the necessity to remedy the overcrowding of churchyards, neo-classical taste, picturesque approaches to landscape design, and romantic conceptions of death. Pere Lachaise cemetery in Paris opened in 1804, and represented the first of the new cemeteries. In Britain, beginning in the 1830s, the place of burial for the majority of the population moved from the Anglican churchyard, which was traditionally at the heart of the community in both physical and spiritual terms, to the new suburban general cemeteries located on the edges of the expanding towns and cities. Initially built by joint stock companies, various Acts in the 1850s ushered in a municipal cemetery building boom throughout Britain. Many were planned according to the formal principles of Loudon, or the picturesque lines of Pere Lachaise and the American rural cemeteries. It was during the transition from churchyard to cemetery in Britain when New Zealand was annexed and settled. The experiences of both the traditional churchyard and the modern cemetery were, therefore, introduced into this country. Long before any weeping marble angels or mournfully draped urns could be found in New Zealand, however, the dead were already being commemorated in a great variety of ways across the landscape of Aotearoa.

98 Morley, 93.
99 Ibid., 91.
101 Ibid.
Chapter Two

Change and Continuity:
The Evolution of Nineteenth Century Maori Urupa and the Establishment of Early European Burial Grounds

Early in the March of 1815 Ruatara lay dying at Rangihoua in the Bay of Islands. Among those attending his death bed was the missionary Thomas Kendall, who brought the dying chief a decanter of rice water at his request. It was customary that a dying person asked for food for the death journey, or oo matenga. 1 This was to sustain them on the pathway to Te Rerenga Wairua. 2 A man who had lived with Europeans for so many years, observes Anne Salmond, might well ask for wine and rice water; “Whether foreign or not, though, such foods were in the shade of the Poo, and so were intensely tapu.” 3 After death Ruatara’s body was trussed in a sitting position, wrapped in his garments and his head decorated with a coronet of feathers. His face was covered with a small piece of English scarlet cloth. To his right sat his head wife, who displayed her sorrow by weeping bitterly and cutting herself. One of Ruatara’s senior relatives, Hongi, occasionally took hold of the dead chief’s hair, in a ritual which assisted his hau to leave his body. Ruatara’s body was now termed Atua. Kendall noted that “Whenever we come near a piece of Taboo’d ground and ask the reason why it is taboo’d; if a person has been buried in it, we always receive for an answer, “Atua lies there”.” 4

Ruatara’s death scene illustrates two important themes which I intend to explore in this chapter. The first is the continuity and change of Maori burial practices in the nineteenth century. Despite the great changes which occurred in Maori society and culture during this time, many ideas and rituals proved resilient. The secondary burial of bones, for example, was practised up until the very end of the nineteenth century. The institution of the tangihanga actually strengthened,

1 Anne Salmond, Between Worlds: Early exchanges Between Maori and Europeans 1773-1815 (Auckland: Viking, 1997), 507. Such food might include “the flesh of kurii (dog), or kiore (rat) or tangata (human), or earthworms of a special sweet kind, or water from a particular stream.”
2 Translates to “the leaping place of spirits near the North Cape”. Salmond, Between Worlds, 507.
3 Salmond, Between Worlds, 507.
4 Thomas Kendall, quoted in Salmond, Between Worlds, 507.
becoming, in the twentieth century, a ceremony not restricted to the elite, while the
notion of the urupa as tapu remains strong today. Change in burial practices did
occur, and was brought about through increased interaction with Europeans, in
particular the missionaries from 1814. Changes, however, were selective and largely
controlled by Maori. European beliefs, rituals or materials relating to death and burial
were incorporated into a Maori context and world view. The sacred nature of the
missionary burial ground, for example, was interpreted in terms of tapu. The
European headstone was sometimes reworked in Maori ways, while Maori tombs
incorporated elements of colonial architecture. Continuity and change also
characterised early European burial practices in New Zealand, as traditional rituals
and forms of memorialisation from Britain were adapted to the new environment and
society, or translated into new materials.

The above scene also demonstrates the importance of peoples’ beliefs and
world views, be they Maori or Pakeha, in influencing their rituals and attitudes toward
death and burial. In early nineteenth century New Zealand both Maori and Pakeha
cosmologies were operating. Salmond explains that when:

Ruatara complained of a ‘lack of breath [hau]’ and fell ill, the scene
was set for a cosmological collision. Competing philosophies swirled
around his sickbed. Ideas of tapu and Christianity, hau and the
immortal soul, ora and life, mate and death battled it out over his
sweating, increasingly emaciated body. ⁵

Each group had a different belief of what had happened, and a different set of rituals
shaped by these beliefs for dealing with the event. For those Maori present at the
death scene, Ruatara’s soul had returned to its source. For the missionaries, his soul
had left his body. ⁶

With these two themes in mind, this chapter will examine Maori and Pakeha
burial practices in the period from Captain James Cook’s discovery of New Zealand
up until 1840. This is prefaced by a brief account of the Maori settlement of New
Zealand. Maori burial practices in prehistory and at the time of contact and early
exploration are then examined, with relation to aspects of the Maori world view, such
as tapu and whakapapa. Much of this discussion draws on archaeology and early

⁵ Salmond, *Between Worlds*, 508.
⁶ Ibid.
European accounts. The impact of pre-1840 trading activity, such as that of sealers and whalers, but in particular the introduction of Christianity by the missionaries from 1814 is then examined. Finally, early European burial grounds are also discussed. Although change and continuity also characterised the rest of the nineteenth century, this chapter ends in 1840, when the cemetery is introduced to New Zealand, as distinct from urupa, wahi tapu, churchyards, and early European burial grounds.

Maori were the first to colonise New Zealand, arriving approximately 1000 years ago from Eastern Polynesia. There is some speculation as to the date of settlement, ranging from Douglas Sutton’s estimate of 250AD, the eleventh century colonisation promoted by James Belich, to the twelfth century settlement proposed by Atholl Anderson. Archaeology does not, however, prove ongoing human settlement prior to the thirteenth century. These Polynesian settlers, like their European counterparts several centuries later, adapted old ways to cope with the new world. As well as bringing the social systems and objects, such as kumara and kiore, of their homeland, the first inhabitants of Aotearoa also brought with them their rituals and practices relating to death and burial.

The Polynesian origin of New Zealand’s earliest people is reflected in the country’s first burial grounds. Following Polynesian custom, the dead were often buried in shallow graves on the edges of the settlements. This can be seen in the early Maori settlement at Palliser Bay where an ancient Polynesian pattern was followed with the dead being interred within the settlement, close to the sleeping houses, cooking sheds, small storage pits, ovens and fire pits. Some of the most famous early Maori burials are located at Wairau Bar. These also reveal practices brought from Polynesia to New Zealand by the first migrants, including burial in extended, crouched and flexed positions. Disarticulated remains were also discovered, indicating that the practice of exposing or exhuming corpses and

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8 Ibid., 28.
10 Anne Salmond, _Two Worlds: First Meetings between Maori and Europeans 1642-1772_ (Auckland: Viking, 1991), 36. Evidence for pre-contact Maori burial practices is derived principally from archaeological investigation, and very early written European accounts.
secondary burial of the bones was carried to New Zealand. Many of the early prehistoric burials at Palliser Bay and Wairau Bar contained grave goods such as moa eggs, adzes and necklaces, with the goods in male graves tending to be more elaborate.

With no continuing intercourse with their homeland, these Polynesian settlers gradually developed a distinctive culture of their own. As Janet Davidson notes, "The subsequent development of Maori culture was to be the development in isolation of one variant of Polynesian culture." Over time, therefore, Polynesian burial practices were gradually modified, reflecting changes within Maori society, although early methods continued to be employed into the nineteenth century. Two main factors influenced developments: one was the growing population, and the other the elaboration of the concept of tapu. "In all horticultural regions by about AD 1500," Salmond claims, "population pressures and a growing competition for resources and prestige were being reflected in the construction of elaborate fortified villages (paa) and foodstores, [and] the secret burial of the dead". This increasing competition and rivalry resulted in the intensification of warfare, attacks and inter-group vendettas. The desecration of burial places and tapu remains was often the means of revenge, into the nineteenth century, creating the need for secret burial places. The secondary burial of disarticulated remains, therefore, became more common in New Zealand. By early European times the body was often first buried, exposed, or entombed above ground, the bones then cleaned, and finally deposited, usually in a secret cave.

This practice was also encouraged by the development and elaboration of the concept of tapu, which required the segregation of the living and the dead. The remains of rangatira were highly tapu, which necessitated the hiding of bones. The bones of a persons' own group were, argues R. S. Oppenheim:

charged with such intense qualities of super-nature that they could only be handled with the utmost care and according to strict rules.

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11 Davidson, 16.
12 Ibid., 6.
15 Davidson, 16-17.
16 Ibid.
Bones were the visible reminders of the dead, but they were dangerous reminders; more than sacred relics to be reverenced, they were by their very nature capable of causing death or misfortune to the living.  

Burial places were kept secret to prevent harm to the people of one’s own group, and to prevent outsiders from desecrating the remains. The concept of tapu was deeply interwoven into each motive.

Maori burial practices and places, therefore, did not ‘stand alone’ but were reflections of, and, in turn strengthened, the Maori world view. Urupa were important components in the institution of tangihanga or funeral ceremony. Tangihanga was a complex cycle of ceremonies which began with the death of the individual. It included a mourning period during which the bereaved, particularly the women, practised haehae, the exposure or burial of body in a sacred place, or wahi tapu, until the flesh had decayed, the exhumation, scraping, decoration and display of bones in a second mourning period, and the subsequent reburial of the remains by tohunga in a secret urupa, often a cave. Tangihanga incorporated many of the significant aspects of Maori society and belief. Tangihanga, claims Oppenheim:

symbolised the nature of the Maori world view and each element in it was there because it was significant in Maori ideology. The wailing, the bloodshed, and the spoken farewells to the dead person, presumed that his wairua was still present; the tapu restrictions imposed on those who handled the body emphasised their relationship to the dead person.  

Maori burial practices, therefore, were inextricably linked to Maori society and the beliefs systems on which it operated. Urupa, in all their forms, were integral components of the cultural and spiritual landscape of a society in which the intertwined themes of death, tapu, mana whenua and whakapapa were among the most paramount.  

The association of settlements with their own particular urupa demonstrates this. Mareana Hond notes that Taranaki Pa often had their associated urupa: “Paa such as Te Maru and Karaka Tonga are well known and all had their own urupaa (burial sites), and own gardens on the lower plains.”  

original setting, among the bones of the ancestors of the hapu that used
the caves, they convey more eloquently than words the awesome
power of tapu, and the supreme significance of ancestors and death.20

Tangihianga, therefore, “essentially operated in the context of Maori concepts
of the relationship between man, the natural and the supernatural worlds.”21 To the
casual observer, the function of tangihanga was to give proper burial to the dead
according to the mana and rank that they had enjoyed in life. More important,
however, was its purpose of controlling, by rigidly prescribed practices, the dangers
which were thought to arise from the state of ritual contamination or tapu which death
brought about. In people tapu correlated with mana. The bones of important people
were highly tapu while the bones of slaves, who had lost all mana and thus tapu could
be made into artefacts.22 This meant that the ceremony of tangihanga was more
complex for, or even restricted to, high ranking people.

Ancestors and whakapapa were extremely important in the Maori view of the
world which “placed man in a natural/supernatural environment, to which he was
related in time through his genealogical connections, and in space through his
kindred.”23 As Davidson notes, “Maori society was organised according to a
particular type of kinship system firmly rooted in the remote past, which was also
found in other parts of Polynesia.”24 The hiding of the bones as part of the tangihanga
ceremony “established the relationship to tribal ancestors and the transition of the
dead person from being a supernaturally dangerous entity to being a genealogical
ancestor who was the focus of group sentiment.”25 The historic and present day
Maori cemetery, as a repository of ancestral remains, still serves this purpose today.

Urupa and wahi tapu were, and are, extremely significant features of the
landscape, both physically and spiritually. Traditional burial sites established a
spiritual connection to the land based on the relationship of the tangata whenua to
ancestors buried in the area, and encouraged a shared sense of identity. Ann
Parsonson observes that:

20 Davidson, 17.
21 Oppenheim, 14.
22 Ibid., 16.
23 Ibid., 18.
24 Davidson, 13.
25 Oppenheim, 19.
Traditions were crucial, too, in strengthening a community’s sense of identity – with people and places. Everywhere, place names marked the links of tuupuna with the land; everywhere there were waahi tapu, places where tuupuna had distinguished themselves or had done everyday things that were remembered, the urupaa where their bones were finally laid to rest, the tuuaahu where tohunga went to pray, the canoe landing and resting places. People’s history was recorded all around them in the land. 26

Ancestral burial grounds were central to tribal and hapu identity, encouraging group solidarity and a connection to the land based on whakapapa. Urupa were also important in establishing mana whenua over the land, as the burial of remains established a right to the burial place. 27 Oppenheim observes that “Where land was occupied on the payment of part of the yearly product, the occupiers were not permitted to bury their dead on it. Permission given by the owners to do this amounted to making a gift of the land to the occupier.” 28 Therefore, burial grounds were central to Maori society, even if they were not physically conspicuous.

The burial of remains also personified the topography of Aotearoa. Many burial caves were, for example, located on mountains. As well as transferring extreme tapu to the mountain, with bone hiding the mountain came to be regarded as a personality in its own right, possessing distinct supernatural powers. 29 For the Taranaki Iwi 30 the mountain is more than a geographical feature: it is a spiritual entity. Mareana Hond wrote of:

the Maaori perception that the upper reaches constituted the head of their ariki (God or paramount chief), the receptacle of tapu in the human body. Post-contact, many Maaori were disturbed to see Pakeha

27 The dead are still invoked in land claims today, as the importance of urupa in asserting mana whenua over the land has continued in the present. Alan Ward noted that “Negotiations over valuable railway lands in central Auckland and central Wellington in 1992-1993 produced claims not only from Maori groups now resident in the area, but from groups defeated and expelled in intertribal war just before white settlement. They had left their place names and dead on the land too, they argued; they too were therefore tangata whenua – people of the land. The conquering groups expostulated; the defeated parties might have certain sacred sites (wahi tapu) where their dead lay, they acknowledged, but mana whenua, the authority over the land, generally lay with the invaders.” Alan Ward, “Treaty-Related Research and Versions of New Zealand History,” in Remembrance of Pacific Pasts: An Invitation to Remake History, ed. Robert Borofsky (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 413.
28 Oppenheim, 74.
29 Ibid., 70.
30 The iwi known as Taranaki, not all iwi in Taranaki.
gathering rocks and shrubs from the mountain which were considered the ‘skull and hair’ of their tuupuna. 31

Urupa contributed to a thorough understanding of their country and its topography, as many of the geographic features represented or remembered ancestors.

By the time Europeans rediscovered New Zealand in 1769 Maori had developed a complex and varied set of death rituals deeply rooted in their world view, religion, and structure of society. Archaeological and early European written accounts show that pre- and early post-contact Maori practised a variety of methods in disposing of their deceased. Two main customs – primary burial in or near settlements and secondary disposition of previously cleaned bones – were practised throughout prehistory, and up to the end of the nineteenth century. Grave goods were sometimes placed with the dead, but were more common in later times in the cave repositories than in primary burials.

At no time was there any one universal burial practice, and the regionalisation evident in Maori burial practices makes it impossible to generalise. Maori burial customs varied over time and space, differing from iwi to iwi and hapu to hapu. Even today practices vary, and it is important to realise that with regard to tangihanga local tribal kaupapa may differ from one hapu to another. 32 Variation between regions, tribal groups and hapu probably increased during the nineteenth century with areas of greater European/Maori interaction, different rates of the spread of Christianity and proximity to mission stations among other factors.

Maori customs relating to death and burial were often recorded in very early European accounts. Oppenheim argues that:

The way in which death was treated in Maori society was sufficiently spectacular to draw the attention of many early visitors and residents in New Zealand. Almost all early accounts contain some reference to death ceremonial and to the customs which surrounded death. 33

31 Hond, 5.
32 Trade Union Education Authority, Understanding Tangihanga (Wellington: Thames Publications, 1990), 4.
33 Oppenheim, 13.
Rituals such as haehae, the slashing of their bodies, especially on the arms, faces and chests, were often observed being practised by mourners. Joseph Banks observed a woman who “wept much, repeating many sentences in a plaintive tone of voice, at every one of which she with a shell cut a gash in some part of her body.” Pottier L’Horme, aboard the *St Jean Baptiste*, also reported that local people told him that when a person died they cut their faces, chests and thighs in mourning with seashells. In the 1770s James Burney noted in his journal he kept while on the *Resolution* that Maori slashed themselves and wept in times of mourning, and that bodies were buried. In addition to this, Crozet observed Maori “assembling in the house of the defunct to weep and utter cries of despair, in recounting his deeds and howling at the end of every account”. In the modern Maori funeral, the custom of tangi remains important.

Actual interments and burial places, in contrast to mourning rituals, were less well reported. Salmond notes, for example, that both Captain Cook and Banks reported in their ‘Accounts’ that in New Zealand, unlike Tahiti, burial was kept secret. They saw no burial places anywhere in the country. This was of course due to the fact that in some regions burial places were hidden, particularly in the north, because of their tapu nature. Conspicuous rituals such as haehae, therefore, received more attention. In other places burial grounds were marked, and descriptions recorded. In 1801, while up the Waihou River, William Wilson observed a burial ground just past the Hikutaia creek, marked by a few huts with an image in the shape of a man in front of them. Salmond states that the island was probably Te Kari Island, a sacred Ngati Paora site. Four years later John Savage described a sacred island near Te Puna which served as a burial ground. He noted that the graves on this island were marked with pieces of wood at the head and foot, and were never disturbed. Savage observed that when one of Te Pahi’s wives was thought to be dying, she was sent to this island.

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34 Joseph Banks, quoted in Salmond, *Two Worlds*, 290.
36 Salmond, *Between Worlds*, 158.
37 Crozet, quoted in Salmond, *Two Worlds*, 423.
38 Today the importance of keeping the knowledge of the location of burial places restricted to certain groups or individuals remains strong. The location of wahi tapu and urupa are often undisclosed to the Office of Treaty Settlements in negotiations with iwi.
with two female attendants who nursed her there until she died. He compared this with the Hindu custom of taking the dying to the Ganges.\(^{40}\)

Oppenheim argues that secondary burial, or the exhumation of the dead and re-depositing of the bones was the norm.\(^{41}\) However, evidence would suggest that although the practice was widespread, its use was restricted to specific individuals. Mareana Hond notes that in Taranaki secondary burial was the privilege of important individuals.\(^{42}\) Likewise, W. J. Phillips argues that common people usually received primary burial in the ground, or in the sandhills by the seashore.\(^{43}\) Many early accounts suggest that primary interment was the way in which most Maori were buried in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In the north Maori told Cook and Banks that people were buried in the ground, while in Queen Charlotte Sound they said that a weight was tied to the body and the dead person was sunk in the sea.\(^{44}\) In his visit to Tokerau, local people also told Pottier L’Horme that when a person died they buried the corpse in the ground.\(^{45}\) Frenchman Crozet remarked that:

> When an ordinary man or woman or child dies the corpse is thrown in the sea; but a fighting man is buried, and on the hillock which covers his corpse spears and javelins are stuck as trophies.\(^{46}\)

Elsdon Best refers to swamp burial, the body being thrown into the swamp and trampled under, and names three burial swamps in the Tuuho area.\(^{47}\) Burial under sandhills occurred and mentions that near Whakatane there was dune known as Opihi whanaunga kore (Opihi the relationless) which had been used as a burial place for many generations.\(^{48}\) In some areas a spring or pool was used as a burial place. Called wai whakaheke tupapaku, these were often areas of water, fresh and at sea, where the peculiar water density caused corpses to sink and stay down without being

\(^{40}\) Ibid., 336. John Savage was aboard the Ferret in 1805. His work, Some Account of New Zealand, was the first book entirely devoted to New Zealand.

\(^{41}\) Oppenheim, 62.

\(^{42}\) Hond, 5-6.

\(^{43}\) W. J. Phillips, Maori Life and Custom (Wellington: Reed, 1966), 175.

\(^{44}\) Salmond argues, however, that the custom of sea burials in Queen Charlotte Sound seems to have been atypical, as in most areas, the presence of dead bodies in the water led to a raahui (ritual prohibition) being placed on the fisheries in that area. European sea burials polluted the tapu of fisheries and shellfish beds. Salmond, Two Worlds, 331.

\(^{45}\) Ibid., 354.

\(^{46}\) Crozet, quoted in Oppenheim, 60.

\(^{47}\) Oppenheim, 62.

\(^{48}\) Ibid.
weighted. Oppenheim notes that in the South Island, the body was sometimes weighted and dropped into a tapu spring. Water burial was also used in Rotorua for people of low rank until relatively recently.

Secondary burial was the privilege of high ranking individuals and notable rangatira. The body was first buried, or placed on a stage or inside a temporary mortuary structure, or else encased within a canoe or suspended in a tree until the flesh had decayed. The hahunga or exhumation involved the retrieval of bones, scraping to remove the flesh and elaborate painting with kokowai. The bones were then reinterred by tohunga within toma tupaku. The locations of these burial places were kept secret in order to protect them from enemy iwi wishing to disturb the mana of the tangata whenua by tampering with the bones of their high ranking ancestors and using them for improper purposes. If found the bones might have been used in the manufacture of fish hooks, to taunt the tuhe of the departed chief. The interment of the bones of chiefs and other tohunga in secret crevices and caves was a practice of extreme tapu and was an important component in the institution of tangihanga. The ritual continued at least up to the end of the nineteenth century, and Hond notes that "The last tohunga known to have performed the hahunga was Kahukura Minarapa of Taranaki Iwi who interred the bones of a Taranaki chief in caves on the mountain in 1896." Burial caves, despite their never being intended for display, could be richly decorated. In the early nineteenth century John White entered a burial cave which he described as follows:

I went alone in to the cave, in the midst of which was built a small house of the swamp reed ornamented with flax of variegated colours, in which were the bones of the arikis of the tribe. At the doorway of the house which measured not more than five by three feet were the bones of a child and near them a small canoe. The bones were no doubt those of an ariki child and the canoe, his plaything had been taken with him to his long rest.

49 Email from Jim Williams to Stephen Deed, 4 November 2003. They were especially common in Canterbury.
50 Oppenheim, 62-63. This remained a form of burial into the 1920s according to Oppenheim.
51 Hond, 5. Kokowai translates to red ochre, while toma tuupaaku are caves or chasms.
52 Ibid., 5-6.
53 Phillips, 175.
54 Hond, 6.
55 John White, quoted in Oppenheim, 74.
George French Angas recorded these various mortuary structures during his journeys through New Zealand in the 1840s. They include: 1. The mausoleum of E Tohi, the mother of Rauparaha, on Mana Island; 2. A memorial made from part of a canoe, placed upright in the ground, at a small island pa in Tory Channel. These were typically erected in memory of chiefs; 3. A carved monument in an old pa near Lake “Rotoaire”, beyond which is an elevated box holding the bones of a child; 4. The waka erected over the grave of Jacky Love, a well-known Te Atiawa Pakeha Maori; 5. A carved monument to three children, near Te Awaiti, Cloudy Bay. These structures indicate the various forms of memorialisation practiced by Maori in the first half of the nineteenth century.

According to White burial caves were owned by several hapu. This meant any trespass on the cave earned the retaliation of all hapu who had bones in it.

In those parts of the country where hiding bones to prevent their desecration was less of a concern mortuary architecture was more common. Tombs and monuments to the dead were rarely reported in the north. This was because tomb building was inconsistent with the northern ideology of burial, which dictated the secret burial of remains to guard against desecration. Oppenheim argues that in the west concealment seems to have been less rigorous. In these areas nineteenth century Pakeha travellers observed mortuary architecture. The structures they described fall into three main categories.

The first category was the canoe cenotaph, which W. J. Phillips argues was one of the most common forms of memorialisation. When a great chief died his waka was cut into two parts, the prow being erected as his memorial. A great deal of skill was often lavished on these monuments. George French Angas described the canoe cenotaph of Wharepouri in his 1847 book, based on his 1842 travels through Taranaki and the south. Located at Huriwhenua in Queen Charlotte Sound, it had the chief’s name and rank inscribed on it. It marked an actual grave and was surrounded by a fence “painted red and ornamented with devices in arabesque work… at every fastening of flax where horizontal rails reached upright fencing were stuck two feathers of the albatross”. In 1838 Jack Polack mentioned cenotaphs which marked the burial places of chiefs on the upper Kaihu, one of which, that of ‘Tamateri’, was carefully avoided since the spirit of the chief was blamed for upsetting canoes. The waka did not always mark graves, and were often simply memorials as the bones may have been hidden elsewhere.

56 Oppenheim, 71.
57 Phillips, 175.
58 Phillips notes that some of the most exquisite carved pieces which have found their way into museums may have once belonged to monuments erected for the dead. Ibid.
59 George Angas, Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand (London: Smith and Elder, 1847), quoted in Oppenheim, 71.
60 J. S. Polack, New Zealand: Being a Narrative of Travels and Adventures in that Country between the Years 1831 and 1837, London, 1838, quoted in Oppenheim, 73.
61 The canoe cenotaph found a twentieth century echo in the memorial to Pomare at Waitara.
Figure 10. The monument to Te Wherowhero’s daughter, at Raroera pa. Built to contain the body in an upright position until it had decayed enough to allow the final deposition of the bones, this four-metre high papa tupapaku was recorded by George French Angas in the 1840s. The carving was entirely executed by a lame man living at Ngahuruhuru with an old bayonet. The pa was laid under a strict tapu by chief Te Waro, the inhabitants leaving all their possessions exactly as they remained the moment of the tapu being pronounced.

Figure 12. This wahi tapu or urupa in the Hokianga was recorded by Jack (Joel) Polack in the 1830s. It contains several canoe markers and a receptacle for the tapu garments of a deceased rangatira. It is likely that the cessation of intertribal warfare meant that well marked burial places became more common through the 1830s.

Taken from R. R. A. Leys and T. W. Sherrin, Early History of New Zealand, From Earliest Times to 1840, Auckland, 1890. Taken from Pakeha Maori, 113.
Figure 11. This urupa above Plimmerton Beach was part of Ringihautata's Taupo Pa. It was sketched by Mary Catherine Medley between 1900 and 1902.

Angas and others also noted the presence of mausoleums. Constructed in communities which felt themselves secure from attack, these burial houses held the bodies of famous or high-ranking people. Phillips argues that they were "erected to commemorate great men." Women, however, also received this treatment in death. Figure 10. depicts the monument erected by Te Wherowhero in memory of his favourite daughter at Raroera pa. These mortuary houses were not always permanent, but were often used as temporary burial places during the process of decomposition. The bones would later receive a secondary burial in the style related above. Angas notes that these were located within paa. The structures, called papa tupapaku, could achieve high levels of expression and beauty. Angas called one "the finest carved monument in New Zealand." Grave goods such as weapons and cloaks, which had belonged to the deceased and were highly tapu, were sometimes placed with the dead.

The third type of mortuary architecture observed by Angas was the wahi tapu. Again, their use was restricted to high-ranking individuals. These structures were designed as repositories for the garments and other tapu objects of the dead. Although varied in form, Angas described one at Porirua as "a singular erection of sticks almost resembling basketwork, elevated on four upright posts and having a semi-circular top". When these and other mortuary structures were used, they were often erected within the confines of a pa (Figure 11.). This could have the effect, however, of making the entire settlement tapu, causing it to be abandoned, as at Raroera pa. In other cases mortuary structures were contained within an urupa or wahi tapu area, like that observed by Polack on his journeys in the 1830s (Figure 12.).

Maori burial practices and structures were already in the process of change by the time George Angas made his observations. The period 1769 to 1840 was one of tremendous adjustment for many Maori, as their world came to include larger and larger numbers of Pakeha. Further developments in Maori burial practices came about with increased European contact and settlement in the early nineteenth century.

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62 Phillips, 175.
63 Angas, quoted in Oppenheim, 72.
64 Oppenheim, 74.
65 Angas, quoted in Oppenheim, 72.
The retention, however, of traditional Maori practices, values and beliefs and the appropriation of European ideas and objects within a Maori context characterised this period. After Cook’s discovery Europeans began to express a commercial interest in New Zealand, in flax as early as 1783, and several ships acquired timber for spars during the 1790s. Sealers were exploiting the Fouveaux area by 1792. The first European settlement in New Zealand was also established, albeit reluctantly, during this decade in Dusky Sound, in 1795. The poor state of the ship *Endeavour* on its way from Sydney to India forced it to put in in Facile Harbour. It was an unhappy community of 244 souls, including 45 escaped convicts, all united only in their desire to get out, which they eventually did. From 1800 whaleships were calling in New Zealand harbours to obtain firewood, timber, water, and women. In the 1830s several hundred whaleships visited, each with about 30 men. These were mainly French, British and American, but also included Dutch, Portuguese, Danish, Germans and Canadian ships. More permanent Pakeha settlers, entrepreneurs, traders and missionaries also began to visit and settle in New Zealand during this time. Belich argues that these “pre-1840 settlers and sojourners were significant in actual history too, bringing the things, thoughts and genes of Europe in considerable bulk.”

They all were important agents of contact, though Belich argues that none was the most important. Although this may be the case generally, I argue that in the instance of introducing the beliefs, practices and material culture of burial from the old world, and impacting on Maori burial traditions, the missionaries were, indeed, the most important. The earliest interest in New Zealand was commercial, and there was little or no conscious effort to transplant the cultural institutions of Britain, England in particular, until the arrival of the missionaries. Commercial visits were seasonal, and of short duration. This meant that such deeply entrenched features of Maori society, such as tangihanga, would not have been affected. Furthermore, rather than trying to reform Maori society and customs, these visits were opportunities for recreation and the purchasing of supplies. While ocean whalenmen may have been the largest group of European agents of contact, it does not follow that they also exerted

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66 Belich, 128.
67 Ibid., 275.
68 Ibid., 138.
69 Ibid., 139. Missionaries have traditionally been portrayed as the main agents of conversion simply because they left the greatest amount of written records, in which they extolled their own achievements.
the greatest lasting cultural influence. Missionaries may have been fewer in numbers than whalers and sealers, yet they no doubt had a greater impact on Maori custom in relation to death and burial than an itinerant sealer, or even a settled whaling station, as they belonged to a profession so intimately related to death.

The (Anglican) Church Missionary Society (CMS) reached New Zealand in 1814. The missionary activity of the early nineteenth century had developed out of the evangelical revival begun by John Wesley in the 1740s in England. In 1795 evangelical Protestantism, initially working within the Church of England, split into Methodism and Wesleyanism, and Low Church Anglicanism, called such to distinguish it from the High Church, with its greater stress on Catholic heritage and lesser emphasis on missionary activity. The evangelical movement was characterised by an emphasis on simplicity of worship and the need for a personal relationship with God. It was particularly attractive to the middle and working classes with its emphasis on the ‘Protestant work ethic’, and was closely related to humanitarianism. In terms of missionary work, “[t]he need to convert the heathen to capitalism as well as Christianity was central to the evangelicals”. Maori became the focus of this attention when Samuel Marsden, the Anglican Chaplain of New South Wales, turned with frustration over his lack of success in Australia and elsewhere in the Pacific at conversion to New Zealand. He established the first mission at Rangihoua, in the Bay of Islands in 1814. The CMS had established three mission stations by 1823, when the (Methodist) Wesleyan Missionary Society (WMS) arrived in New Zealand, establishing a station at Whangaroa. The Catholic Church arrived in 1838 from France, led by Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier. By 1844 they had already established a dozen mission stations, the same number as the CMS in 1845.

These mission stations, and those which would subsequently be established throughout New Zealand, had their accompanying burial grounds, little pockets of holy soil, where, though France and England may have been on the other side of the

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70 In 1839 the CMS had 169 New Zealand residents (including families) and the WMS had 37. Ibid., 135.
71 Ibid., 128.
72 Ibid., 128-129.
73 Ibid., 134.
74 Ibid., 135.
75 Ibid.
world, the bodies of the faithful could be returned to the earth with all the rites of the Church. Maori did not instantly start using European style burial grounds. European burial practices were intimately linked with European religious notions, just as Maori burial practices reflected their world view. This meant that missionary burial practices and cemeteries only really made sense within the framework of Christianity, and their adoption by Maori required their conversion to Christianity.

Maori were only really exposed to or adopted European burial practices after 1830, with greater Maori engagement with Christianity. Belich notes that around 1830, with the end of the intertribal wars, there occurred a great increase in Maori interest in Christianity. Over 60 per cent of Maori counted themselves as Christians by the 1850s. Belich does warn, however, that their definition of Christianity may have differed to that of the missionaries. It is also important to remember that this ‘mass conversion’ to Christianity owed as much to Maori agency and materialistic rivalry as it did to the attractiveness of Christian doctrine, or an affinity with the stories of the Old Testament. With the end of the wars, the “acquisition of missionaries, of Christian knowledge and of the literacy that often went with it provided a new and non-violent arena of rivalry.” Possession of these assets bestowed mana upon the iwi or group. As Belich notes this Maori agency/rivalry “certainly helped spread Christian ideas”. The fact that Christian knowledge and literacy were actively sought after by Maori aided in the adoption of British burial practices. Published in Maori, the Order of Consecration of a Burial Ground, produced by the Church of England press at Paihia in 1838 demonstrates that by the late 1830s at least, English and Christian notions of what a burial ground should be were being disseminated from mission stations by literate Maori. Missionaries and mission stations were, therefore, highly important agents of contact in disseminating Christian notions of burial, as well as operating as showcases for these notions in practice.

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76 Ibid., 217.
77 Ibid., 219.
78 Certainly, Maori shaped Christianity in different ways, and swapping between denominations or even adhering to more than one. Ibid., 218.
79 Ibid., 164.
80 Ibid., 155.
Figure 13. In 1841 Richard Taylor recorded the “Waimate Mission church and dear Arthur’s grave with Pukenui”. The church, often located within a churchyard burial ground, was physically and spiritually at the heart of the mission community.

Reference Number: E-296-q-034-2
With this peaceful rivalry, the number of mission stations, churches and chapels multiplied greatly from the middle of the 1830s. Indeed, Belich states that "Something of a church rush took place in the 1840s."81 The Ngati Ruanui tribe, which was not large, had 30 churches by 1848. By 1850 the Tauranga/Whakatane region had eleven Catholic chapels, while Rotorua region had thirteen. Each region served less than 100 Catholics. These missions and churches were vital points of contact between Maori and Pakeha, where Maori could see European customs in use, including burial customs. Burial grounds were integral components of these mission stations, providing something of a familiar landscape for the burial of the missionaries, their families, and surrounding settlers, and a new model of burial for their Maori flock. The importance of religion in mission settlements, and their early date of establishment, means that many used a churchyard for burial (Figure 13.). Occasionally a mission station would use a Maori urupa, rather than establishing a new one. This undoubtedly made missionary innovation in burial more acceptable to Maori. Such a burial ground is located at Foxton, and is now known as Ihakara Gardens. It began its existence as the urupa of the Ngati Ngarongo, one of the hapu of the Ngati Raukawa who first occupied the locality of Te Awahou in the 1830s.82 In 1848 the Rev. James Duncan, a missionary of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland, arrived in Te Awahou where he established a mission. He regarded the urupa as appropriate for Christian burial, and conducted the burial services of many Maori and Pakeha buried there.83

Of course, conversion to Christianity was not all about acquiring chapels or being able to read. It was also a sincerely felt phenomenon, as can be seen by the changes which conversion brought about in Maori burial practices. With increased missionary activity and the widespread acceptance of some form of Christianity among Maori in the 1830s and 1840s the institution of tangihanga came heavily under the influence of religious ideas from European society. The missionaries were anxious to discourage some customs of tangihanga, such as the hahunga and ritual

81 Ibid., 217.
82 Nicola Frean, "The Story of Foxton’s Oldest Cemetery," in Historic Places 6 (September 1984), 4. This particular branch of Ngati Ngarongo, known as Patukohuru, had left the Waikato in the 1820s.
self-mutilation. They also actively tried to repress ideas such as personal tapu. In their efforts they met with some success. Oppenheim argues that:

Formulated in Christian terms tapu came to be interpreted as sacredness, and although the undertones of the older Maori view were retained the rigid controls on behaviour were much relaxed. The tangihanga as a ceremonial was shorn of the implications that it had formerly and became reconceived as a variant of Christian funeral ceremonies.  

There was, however, no universal change of Maori burial practices and beliefs in the nineteenth century. Despite the major changes which did occur, many aspects of Maori burial practice and the beliefs upon which they were founded, persisted. The exhumation and hiding of bones were still occasionally occurring late in the century. Burial grounds were still interpreted in terms of the Maori world view relating to death and remained immensely tapu. Oppenheim notes that:

in spite of the establishment of neat mission burial grounds Maoris persisted in regarding them with a reverence which, while it could hardly be deprecated, nevertheless came more from Maori religious ideas than it did Christian ones.  

Today the tangihanga remains the most important ceremonial in Maori culture. Although much modified, with the religious aspects having been replaced by Christian ceremonies, the fundamental elements of the gathering remain.

The continuity of Maori practices and beliefs after 1840, such as tangihanga and tapu, was assisted by the fact that with increased Pakeha settlement after the Treaty of Waitangi Maori withdrew from contact with Europeans as the nineteenth century drew on. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, and into the twentieth, therefore, Maori and Pakeha, as Michael King argues, “were insulated from one another geographically, socially and culturally.” King argues that this separation meant that into the twentieth century there remained “a continuing commitment on the part of Maori to Maori values and practices, and to specifically Maori religious  

84 Oppenheim, 21.
85 Ibid., 20. Mareana Hond notes that this was last practised in Taranaki in 1896. Hond, 6.
86 The washing of hands after being in the cemetery is still practised today in order to remove (the pollution caused by) tapu.
87 Oppenheim, 20-21.
88 Ibid., 121.
89 Michael King, Nga Iwi O Te Motu: 1000 Years of Maori History (Auckland: Reed, 1997), 81.
Figure 14. The totara headstone erected over the grave of Ropihia in the Bolton Street Cemetery, Wellington, during the 1860s.

Author’s own photograph, 2004.
Figure 15. The tomb of the first Maori King, Potatau Te Wherowhero, at Ngaruawahia, painted by William Fox in 1872.

observances.” The development of the rural marae and its associated urupa, as a place to preserve and practice tikanga Maori meant that Maori burial custom, although incorporating aspects of European religious ceremony and material culture, remained essentially Maori.

As well as recognising continuity, it is important to realise that not all changes in Maori burial practices were due Christianity or missionary pressure. Many innovations came from Maori themselves, who adopted those aspects of Pakeha culture they desired, adapting what they took to their own particular taste and requirements. As Belich notes, “Maori did not passively receive Europe but actively engaged with it.” We have seen that this was the case with Christianity. Maori also embraced aspects of European material culture and technology, adapting them to their own uses, needs and desires. Pakeha mortuary items, such as the headstone, were reformulated in a uniquely indigenous fashion. In Wellington’s Bolton Street Cemetery, a totara headstone was found in the roots of a giant pohutukawa marking the grave of a young Maori girl, possibly Ropihia of Waiwhetu who died in 1862 (Figure 14.). The headstone is Gothic in form, and intricately decorated with Maori carving and inscription. In other cases, Maori burial practices exploited Pakeha technology. Papa tupapaku, for example, continued to be built through the nineteenth century, incorporating elements of Pakeha material culture. Figure 15. is a watercolour of the tomb constructed to house the body of the first Maori King, Potatau Te Wherowhero. Elements of colonial domestic architecture have been incorporated, such as the trellis supports and weatherboards, although the arabesque roof detail is highly individual. The illustration clearly demonstrates how Maori adopted Pakeha technology, producing unique innovations in indigenous burial practice which had little to do with Christianity.

For Europeans during this time burial in New Zealand was also characterised to varying degrees by the transferral and continuity of burial practices from home, wherever that may have been, the adaptation of these practices to the new environment in which they found themselves, or even the adoption of indigenous

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90 Ibid., 97.
91 Belich, 154.
92 Gravemarkers were not unknown in Maori burial practices, although they were restricted to high ranking individuals and in form were nothing like the European burial marker.
Figure 16. This decorated waka cenotaph and enclosure was “Erected by the Maoris over the grave of a white man, Tawaite.” It was recorded on 22 March 1843 by Arthur Herbert Messenger.

traditions. For many of the early explorers and travellers, whalers and sealers, death in such a strange land must have seemed a grim prospect indeed, devoid of its traditional trappings. In December of 1769 one Frenchman, a Moorish lascar, and two natives of Pondicherry died aboard the *St Jean Baptiste*.\(^{93}\) Their bodies were thrown overboard. Burial at sea was a reality for many early explorers and travellers to New Zealand. Even those early Europeans who died on land were not always assured of a burial in a style they would have recognised. In 1772 Maori killed a party of 26 French explorers, including Marion du Fresne, in the Bay of Islands. Their flesh was eaten and their bones, far from being buried with dignity, were fashioned into forks and flutes.\(^{94}\) The early sealers and whalers received simple burials. When sealer and whaler Jack Price died at Preservation Inlet in 1819 his grave was dug by his fellow men, and marked by a slab of totara giving his name and date of death.\(^{95}\) Although still in good condition when it was viewed 50 years later, it has now disappeared.

Pakeha Maori in early New Zealand were Europeans and non-Europeans who became fully integrated within Maori communities, adapting to tribal life. Although these Pakeha Maori were agents of contact and change, they were often more influenced by their new home, both consciously and unconsciously taking on its habits, customs and rhythms. This was evident not only in life, but in death. Jacky Love was a famous Pakeha Maori who was highly regarded by Te Ati Awa long after he left Taranaki. At his tangi in 1840 two hundred Maori escorted his body to the grave, and subsequently erected a monument over it such as usually marked the burial place of a great chief. Following Maori custom, this was a canoe placed upright in the ground, painted in bold designs with red and black dye (*Figure 9.*).\(^{96}\) *Figure 16.* represents the memorial erected by Maori over the grave of an esteemed “white man” named Tawaite. In 1837 John Kent, the Tainui Pakeha Maori, was buried at ‘a sacred place’ at Manukau, usually reserved for rangatira Maori.\(^{97}\) As these accounts suggest, only those Pakeha who had achieved mana and a high standing within their iwi were

\(^{93}\) Salmond, *Two Worlds*, 337-338.
\(^{94}\) Belich, 76-77.
\(^{97}\) Ibid., 185.
Figure 17. In October 1848 William Swainson sketched the “Burial ground of the first settlers, Petoni Beach.” Typical of early European burial grounds it was simple, rough, and featured the use of local materials.

Figure 18. The Old Mission Station at Waikouaiti, built 1840. The neglected burial ground in the foreground still contains some headstones and wooden grave enclosures in this 1887 photograph.

Hocken Library, University of Otago, Dunedin. Reference Number: c/n E6099/11.

Figure 19. Christ Church, Russell, photographed in the 1860s.

accorded such a privilege. Their mana was evident in the elaborate tangihanga the tribes accorded them.

Such men were, however, the exception and the burial grounds of other early Pakeha residents of New Zealand reflected more the transferral of British practices, which were then modified according to the new environment and available resources. Sometimes the translation into indigenous materials and the small amount of time and money the first settlers had to spend on grave ornamentation meant that early Pakeha burial grounds were often grimly simple, such as that at Petone (Figure 17.), not at all resembling their English counterparts. Many of New Zealand’s earliest Pakeha burial grounds were established as necessary components of mission stations. In these an effort was made to mimic the traditions of home. This was often hampered by a lack of traditional materials and resources, and the isolated nature of many early settlements, so that these early burial grounds were often completely unlike anything in England. Headstones were often improvised from wood in the absence of supplies of stone and masons to work it, while graves were often marked by wooden picket fences, in landscapes devoid of ornamentation and characterised by severe practicality. This is illustrated by Figure 18, where early graves dot the desolate landscape of the Waikouaiti mission station.

In the more permanent and larger concentrations of Pakeha settlement the burial traditions of the old world were transplanted to new soil. There were approximately 2000 Europeans in New Zealand by 1840 located around the country, primarily on the coast, in various concentrations. Kororareka (Russell) was one of the largest European settlements prior to 1840, boasting at least 100 European inhabitants by 1839, while some 530 lived in greater Kororareka. In 1836 the residents of Kororareka erected Christ Church. Surrounding it was the Anglican graveyard which had, in fact, received its first interment the year before. This was one of the earliest attempts to consciously replicate the traditional churchyard of the old world which was, at this time, still the main place of burial for Britons. Of course, as a colonial interpretation there were some minor concessions to tradition. The church was wooden, as were many of the gravemarkers. The ancient yew tree was absent,

98 Belich, 198-199.
99 This is the oldest church in New Zealand.
Figure 20. The Old French Cemetery, L’Aube Hill, Akaroa, pictured in the 1920s prior to “restoration”.

Taken from Gwenda Turner, Akaroa, Banks Peninsula, New Zealand (Dunedin: John McLndoe, 1977), 51.
substituted with manuka trees. Wooden palings enclosed graves, with a wooden fence surrounding the whole (Figure 19.). The occupants of the churchyard also clearly indicated that this was New Zealand, not England. Early settlers, whalers, Maori, sailors, men, women and children, victims of drowning, disease and interracial conflict all lie side by side. For all of these people, the churchyard at Kororareka represented both change and continuity.

Not all New Zealand’s earliest burial grounds were British. On L’Aube Hill in Akaroa lie buried the remains of the settlement’s French inhabitants, many of whom arrived there in 1840, aboard the Comte de Paris. Believed to be the oldest consecrated cemetery in the South Island, it was consecrated by Bishop Pompallier. Shaded by weeping willows planted in the late 1830s from clippings said to be from Napoleon’s grave at Saint Helena, the burial ground reflects the importance of the French in early New Zealand history (Figure 20.). Although they are often regarded as a mere blip on the historical radar the French left their mark and their people on and in the landscape. For at least five years some 300 French settlers and naval personnel lived as a French settlement or “semi-state” under French law and French custom. The L’Aube Hill French burial ground in Akaroa is evidence of that which Belich calls this “history that almost happened”.

By the 1840s a variety of indigenous and introduced burial practices were in use in New Zealand, as reflected in the burial grounds, urupa, churchyards and wahi tapu of the time. At the time of European contact Maori employed a variety of burial methods, such as primary and secondary burial, which had their origin in Polynesia. These methods had evolved in response to social changes, including population increase and the development of the concept of tapu, and varied from region to region. Burial places became integral components of the complex ceremonial of the tangihanga, which embodied important aspects of the Maori world view, such as ancestors, tapu, wairua, and the landscape. While the graves of lower ranking

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100 Russell Museum, Christ Church Cemetery Trail (Russell: Russell Museum, 1998), 3.
102 Belich, 179.
103 Ibid.
individuals may have been unmarked, important, respected and high ranking Maori, both male and female, sometimes had graves marked by monuments.

Changes in the way Maori buried and memorialised their dead were wrought through interaction with Europeans, in particular the missionaries, after 1814. Missionaries introduced the Pakeha material culture relating to death, as well as the Christian belief upon which European ritual was founded. The tangihanga was reformed along Christian lines, and tapu was reformulated in terms of sacredness. Change accelerated with mass Maori engagement with Christianity after 1830 and the inter-group rivalry which greatly increased the number of mission stations, where burial was set as an example, and from where European ideas on burial were disseminated. Both the change and continuity, however, of Maori burial practices and beliefs distinguished this period. Mission burial grounds were revered within the Maori world view, and regarded as extremely tapu, while actual practices such as hahunga continued to the end of the nineteenth century. Maori religious ideas continued to exist alongside Christian ones. Pakeha material culture was often reworked to satisfy Maori taste, while traditional Maori practices such as papatupapaku building incorporated Pakeha technologies.

Continuity and change also characterised burial practices for Europeans in New Zealand in this period. Pakeha Maori represented the ultimate example of change from traditional European ways of death. Fully adopting Maori customs in life, those who had become highly respected by their iwi were accorded the full honours possible through Maori burial in death. Most Pakeha burial grounds during this time, however, made some attempt to introduce the burial customs of Britain. This was particularly noticeable in the mission stations. Pakeha in early settlements also consciously transplanted the traditions of the Old World into new soil. The Anglican Christ Church and its surrounding graveyard which was constructed 1835-6 at Kororareka is one example of this. Such transplantations, however, involved a degree of adaptation. New and unfamiliar materials were adapted to old ways, while innovative practices evolved in response to the new environment.

The process of change, and of continuation which we saw in its embryonic form in the death of Ruatara at the beginning of the chapter did not end in 1840. Both
Maori and Pakeha experienced change and continuity in burial practices after this date. The difference, as we shall see, was that for Maori change in traditional practices accelerated, while for Pakeha the transplantation of British practices strengthened.
Figure 21. Wellington realised: this detail from the 1840 “Plan of the town of Wellington”, drawn up by Captain Mein Smith, shows the undivided 18 acres of the general cemetery, and a small area to the south (top) allocated for Roman Catholic burials.

Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.
Reference Number: MapColl 832.4799gbd/1840/Acc.316.
Chapter Three

Tradition and Adaptation:
The Development of the Cemetery in Nineteenth Century
New Zealand

The first New Zealand Company\(^1\) settlers arrived in Port Nicholson, later renamed Wellington, aboard the *Tory* in January 1840. These people had chosen to become participants in Edward Gibbon Wakefield's scheme to replicate an idealised English society in a new land. Also aboard the *Tory* was the Chief Surveyor for the Company, Captain Mein Smith, who bore express directions to provide the new town with "ample reserves for all public purposes, such as a cemetery".\(^2\) Eighteen acres were provided as a general "cemetry", while separate provision was made for Roman Catholics (*Figure 21*). However, for the vast majority of settlers the churchyard was the traditional place of burial in the communities they had left. Both traditional and new ideas regarding burial, which were then current in Britain, were brought to New Zealand.

This chapter continues the examination of the historical and cultural influences which shaped New Zealand's historic burial grounds and cemeteries. New Zealand's nineteenth century cemeteries are distinct products of the time in which they were made, the people who made them, and the land in which they were made. The New Zealand villa is often quoted as being typical and expressive of the desires and aspirations of the nineteenth century New Zealander. So too were their cemeteries. The houses of the dead, like the houses of the living were a perfect expression of the reality, hopes, dreams, beliefs, and ideals of nineteenth century New Zealand. Our cemeteries reflect our unique history, and so we must look at this history, and its people, to understand the cemetery, for, as Michael Ragon has observed, "The necropolis is the reverse side of the metropolis."\(^3\) With Ragon's observation in mind, this chapter examines several intertwined influences which have shaped the historic cemeteries which today form such integral parts of our cultural and historic landscape.

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\(^1\) Established in 1837 by Edward Gibbon Wakefield to 'systematically colonise' New Zealand.
\(^2\) Quoted in Alington, *Unquiet Earth*, 7.
\(^3\) Ragon, 39.
These include ethnicity, religion, regionalism, class, family, and political and social ideals. I also analyse economic and occupational ties, and events of major impact in the New Zealand context which give our cemeteries a degree of regional character. These varied influences are united by the broader themes of ‘time, people and place’. An examination of these influences assists in understanding the different types of burial grounds which were established in nineteenth century New Zealand, and sheds light on the presence and style of individual components of the material culture of the cemetery. Further changes in Maori burial practices are also discussed.

Timing was very influential in determining what kind of burial grounds were established in New Zealand. 1840, in particular, was significant for two reasons. First, with the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in February, 1840 was the year which established New Zealand as a British colony and opened the way for increased colonisation. The settlement of New Zealand by predominantly English, Scottish and Irish immigrants would largely determine the character of many of the country’s cemeteries and burial grounds. However, the intended and actual ‘Britishness’ of the colony would not be the only influence upon the development of the New Zealand cemetery, which came to be a reflection of national and regional history, peoples, and events. Secondly, 1840 was the year in which the cemetery, as distinct from Maori and European burial grounds and early churchyards, was transplanted to the New Zealand landscape. Burial practice in Britain, however, was still in a stage of transition from the traditional churchyard to the modern cemetery. This transition is reflected in the establishment of both churchyard burial grounds and public cemeteries in this country.

As an ideal society, New Zealand, and particularly the ‘Wakefield settlements’, had planned to incorporate those aspects of English society and culture considered the best. The colony would be a ‘Better Britain’. Crowded urban churchyards and intramural burial were two of those features of the Old World which

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4 I have not been able to examine every influence behind the cemetery because of their vast number. The people and history of each district have shaped their burial grounds. I have, therefore, attempted to outline some general influences upon cemetery development which are applicable to the whole country. One possible influence I would have liked to have dealt with is gender. Jacqui Craig’s 1993 study “An Examination of Gender Differences in Gravestones in the Northern Cemetery” [of Dunedin], suggests that this was a real influence in the nineteenth century, in an era when women were defined in relation to their husbands and family, both in life and in death. Her unpublished report was unavailable at the time of my study.
Figure 22. Wellington imagined: while this plan of the proposed City of Wellington, 1839, did not take into account the difficulty of local topography, it did make ample provision for the burial of its inhabitants in four eight-acre cemeteries, located in each corner. It was a modern, if impractical, piece of town-planning.

Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.
were best left behind. Instead, in New Zealand large public cemeteries adjacent to urban areas, would receive the dead (Figure 22.). Despite the old-fashioned nature of some of Wakefield’s ideas, his towns were thoroughly modern in the incorporation of cemeteries, considering that both the Government and local bodies had done little to establish them in Britain, where they were still the preserve of private companies. It was also hoped that the burial grounds of this Better Britain would be free from religious division or dominance by the Anglican Church. Religion, however, was not so easily discarded in the New World, and conflict was particularly strong over the issue of burial grounds.

The introduction of the cemetery to New Zealand in 1840 was closely linked to the introduction of another Pakeha construct. As Belich notes, 1840 brought “a remarkable demographic entity to New Zealand shores: the instant township.” Auckland was established 1840-41 as a joint venture between Hobson’s new government, Sydney merchants and local Maori as a purpose-built capital. The New Zealand Company and its affiliates, the Otago and Canterbury Associations, established six other settlements: Wellington (1840), Wanganui (1841), New Plymouth (1841), Nelson (1842), Dunedin (1848) and Christchurch (1850). An important feature of several of these new settlements was the area set aside for recreation and for town-belts. Belich observes that these new cities came fully equipped “with town belts of open land girding their loins against urban industrial vice.” In the nineteenth century cemeteries were often established within these town belts and reserves, as in Dunedin, where each end of the town belt is crowned by a cemetery, or in Wellington with its Bolton Street Cemetery (now known as the Bolton Street Memorial Park). Urban cemeteries at this time, as we saw in Chapter One, were designed to be morally improving and were perfectly in keeping with the ideology of the topography of these new towns. Urban churchyards on the other hand were scarce in the Wakefield towns. In New Plymouth stands Saint Mary’s Church, surrounded by its graveyard. Built in the 1840s on land reserved for recreational purposes it stands as a reminder that back ‘Home’, churchyards were still the norm, and would be until the next decade or so.

5 Belich, 188.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., 305.
‘Old New Zealand’ and its burial practices and grounds did not disappear with the advent of the Treaty and the cemetery. As Belich notes, “In the twenty years after 1840, then, there were three New Zealands: Aotearoa, or independent Maoridom; the persisting Old New Zealand interface; and the New New Zealand of mass European settlement.”

Maori burial practices continued in some areas with little modification into the 1890s as many Maori regions remained relatively independent, or at least isolated, into the twentieth century. Urupa and early European burial grounds and churchyards continued to serve the needs of their communities, as in Russell where the Christ Church churchyard only closed in 1901. The New New Zealand of mass European settlement, however, came to have the greatest influence on the development of our nineteenth century cemeteries.

Traditionally, these settlers have been simply described as British or English. Much New Zealand historiography depicts nineteenth century Pakeha as a relatively homogeneous group. Jeanine Graham, for example, argues “Cultural homogeneity was ... one of the hallmarks of colonial society.”

At first glance, both Pakeha society in the nineteenth century and the cemeteries Pakeha created might appear relatively homogeneous. But closer inspection of religious and ethnic affiliations and divisions reveals that this was not the case. There was not one, but many identities within nineteenth century New Zealand. As Belich argues, New Zealand “was more ethnically diverse than the crusaders [promoters of immigration] would have liked, and much more diverse than subsequent myths of homogeneity allow.” The term ‘British’ disguises the ethnic, regional and religious affiliations which divided and united the peoples of the British Isles.

The English were the largest ethnic group. They dominated early immigration to New Zealand, and, with the exception of the Scottish settlement of Otago, the Wakefield settlements were almost wholly English. They came not only as Company settlers, and English immigration remained consistent throughout the nineteenth century, making the English numerically and culturally dominant in New Zealand into

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8 Ibid., 192.
9 Ibid., 271.
11 Belich, 318.
the twentieth century. Approximately 100,000 Irish immigrated to New Zealand in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Slightly larger in number than the Irish were the Scots. Tom Brooking estimates that 117,000 Scots migrated to New Zealand from 1840 to 1936. More than 90 per cent of these were Lowlanders. Many came from around Glasgow and Edinburgh, and it is probable that they were acquainted with the great cemeteries of these cities. It is no coincidence that in the Scottish-settled city of Dunedin three large modern cemeteries were opened between 1858 and 1872. Their influence on New Zealand’s cemeteries is made more likely by the fact that the Scots were over-represented in New Zealand where they comprised over twenty per cent of the population, compared with ten per cent of the British Isles.

By the end of the nineteenth century these migrants from the British Isles had formed the core of a stable Pakeha ethnic mix. In 1891 the English and Welsh combined made up 50.9 per cent of the population, the Scots made up slightly more than one-fifth of the population at 21.7 per cent, and the Irish slightly less than one-fifth at 18.7 per cent. This was a total of 91.3 per cent. The European population of New Zealand had swelled from 5000 in 1841 to over 600,000 in 1891. Many of these were native born, with the 1886 census recording that nearly 52 per cent of the population was New Zealand born. Such a stable and increasingly New Zealand born population mix, the fact that these settlers had a shared experience of the traditional churchyard and the modern public cemetery of England, Scotland and Ireland, and burial laws in New Zealand meant that some degree of uniformity and homogeneity among cemeteries in the nineteenth century resulted. This was further encouraged by widespread fashions and tastes.

Ethnic identity was, however, still expressed through the medium of a relatively homogeneous material culture. Combined with religion and regionalism, ethnicity could gain even greater expression, as is discussed later in this chapter. Not

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12 Akenson, 191.
13 Ibid. 1936 was the year the Empire Settlement Act ran its course.
14 Ibid., 192.
15 Belich, 319.
16 The Southern Cemetery (at Little Paisley) 1858, Andersons Bay Cemetery (formerly the Eastern Necropolis) 1862, and the Northern Cemetery, 1872. These were tourist attractions in Dunedin, just as they were in Scotland. Ngaire Ockwell, “Brief Look at the History of Dunedin Cemeteries”.
17 Akenson, 191.
18 Graham, 112.
only are the British represented in the country’s cemeteries. In 1891 8.7 per cent of New Zealand’s Pakeha population was non-British Isles in origin. This included Dalmations, the Polish, Jews, Chinese, Germans, Italians, Americans and Scandinavians. Many of these immigrants came during the gold rushes of the 1860s in Otago and the West Coast, creating cosmopolitan populations, or during the 1870s with the assisted immigrant schemes. Our historic burial grounds are made distinctively New Zealand in flavour by representing the different ethnic and religious groups who settled in this country in the nineteenth century.

The Jews have had a presence in New Zealand since first settlement. By the 1840s the Jewish communities of Auckland and Wellington were significant enough to warrant the establishment of their own burial grounds within the public cemeteries. Jews arrived in greater numbers with gold rushes in Otago and the West Coast. Before the discovery of gold in Otago in 1861 only five Jewish families lived in the region. By December 1861 103 Jews lived in Otago, rising to 428 by 1864. Rarely coming as miners, they often set up businesses in the new frontier towns. Their graves in the cemeteries of the old gold districts are a testimony to their presence.

With the 1860s and the discovery of gold came a new ethnic group, bringing with them their own distinctive funeral customs. Chinese immigration commenced in 1866, and by the mid-1870s the Chinese made up over four per cent of Otago’s non-Maori population. Approximately seventy per cent were Poonyu Cantonese, originating from Poonyu County. Invited by the Otago Provincial Council, many came from Victoria where they had endured much ill-treatment. Part of this was

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19 Akenson, 191. This excludes Maori.
20 In the Terrace End Cemetery in Palmerston North there is a Lutheran Division. Those buried in this division are mainly from Denmark, Norway and Sweden, along with a few of German descent. Scandinavians played an important part in the early history of Palmerston North. In 1871 two groups of immigrants from Denmark, Norway and Sweden were brought to New Zealand under the first of the special settlement schemes organised by the New Zealand government. The presence of Scandinavians in Manawatu attracted others who emigrated from that area to settle in this district during the 1871-1900 period, along with a number of German settlers fleeing the 'iron and blood' policies of Bismarck's German Empire. Palmerston North Cemeteries. www.deleriummag.com/nzealgrave.html. (14 April 2003). Over 4,000 Scandinavians were assisted out in the 1870s, and by 1881 Germans and Scandinavians were around two per cent of the population. Belich, 317-318.
provoked by their funeral and burial practices which were deemed 'heathen' by the European population. Living in all-male settlements, the Chinese in New Zealand were largely segregated from the European population “by choice, culture and custom”.

They had come to New Zealand for the sole purpose of sending as much money as possible to their families in China, so that they might later join them in prosperous ease for their old age. Permanent residence in New Zealand was not intended by the majority, although some married into Pakeha families. After goldpanning by hand was exhausted many set up own businesses as green grocers or market gardeners near the end of the century. The 1881 Census recorded 1,260 Chinese in New Zealand. This disturbed Richard Seddon who, as MP for Westland, introduced the Chinese Immigration Restriction Act (1881), which imposed a high entry or poll tax. Conditions of entry into New Zealand for Chinese were further tightened in 1908. With no new immigrants, New Zealand’s Chinese population dwindled, often leaving only neglected graves in remote mining towns.

The ethnic composition of nineteenth century New Zealand was an important factor in determining the ways in which the country’s cemeteries developed. The nineteenth century immigrants to New Zealand brought with them the burial practices and customs of their homelands, adapting them to the environmental and social conditions in which they found themselves. Few Pakeha had come to New Zealand as a deliberate act of rejection of the society of the Old World. As Jeanine Graham notes, this meant that in terms of the institutions and customs transplanted to this country, “a strident originality was hardly to be expected”. The number of British immigrants ensured that the British models of the churchyard burial ground and the cemetery were transplanted to New Zealand. The use of headstones, family plots, and plantings was also carried on in the colonial context. Often, the customs of home were adapted, and given a uniquely antipodean expression. Graham notes that:

As the settlers came to know their new landscape and its resources an imported heritage found its colonial expression, through housing styles and gardens, farming methods and social gatherings, in churches, schools, and community services.

24 Ibid.
25 Graham, 113.
26 Ibid., 119.
Graham may well have added burial grounds to this list. In the colonial cemetery the cabbage tree symbolised immortality in the absence of British evergreens, and white wooden palings replaced the cast iron grave surrounds of British cemeteries.27

In facing the ultimate crisis of death the immigrants fell back on comforting and familiar practices, customs, words and images, encouraging the use of distinctive ethnic practices. This is particularly evident in the burial practices of New Zealand's nineteenth century Jewish population. Even the smallest Jewish communities made sure that ground was purchased for a cemetery so that burials could take place under Jewish Rites and in consecrated ground.28 In Wellington, part of the Bolton Street Cemetery was portioned off with permission from Willoughby Shortland. The first burial was in the evening of 3 February 1845 for the infant son of Benjamin Levy. According to Jewish custom, "‘everything was conducted as it would be in an old established community.’"29 Jewish gravestones were inscribed in Hebrew and speak of the retention of Hebrew heritage in nineteenth century New Zealand. The mature trees which ornament the Jewish sections of our older cemeteries were planted according to the custom that children of the Hebrew School planted trees on Tu B'Shvat, the Jewish Arbour Day.30 The planting of a tree was often a gesture of consolation to a family when a loved one died. Planting a tree at least once in your life-time was also required by the Torah. For those Jews in colonial New Zealand for whom it was not possible to plant a tree in the Holy Land, the cemetery was one of the substitute places.31

The use of distinctively Jewish burial practices in the New Zealand cemetery was also an assertion of ethnic identity. Many immigrant ethnic groups in New Zealand used the cemetery as a forum for asserting and encouraging identity. For the Irish of Hamilton's Irishtown, the cemetery symbolised the community's 'Irish' inheritance and identity. "With few other Irish historical references available," argues

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27 Such substitutions were usually only necessary early on, or in rural areas. The earliest burial grounds, therefore, were the most original. As the nineteenth century progressed in New Zealand, cemeteries in this country began to look more like those of Britain as marble and cast iron became freely available.
28 Ngaire Ockwell, (NZSG), Southern Cemetery Dunedin Jewish Portion, vol.5, c.
29 Alington, Unquiet Earth, 57.
30 Ngaire Ockwell, (NZSG), Southern Cemetery Dunedin Jewish Portion, vol.5, c.
Cathy O’Shea-Miles, “the cemetry was an important part of the memory of the community: the cemetry became a place of community socialisation, as well as place of nurturing cultural and familial identity.”

For New Zealand’s nineteenth century Chinese communities, located mainly in the gold districts of Otago and Westland, cemeteries provided locations in which traditional customs could be practiced. Chinese burial practices differed noticeably from European rites, being mostly based on Cantonese village customs of Guangdong province. At the funeral food, often pork, was consumed at the grave, where crackers were let off and paper money burnt. These rituals often drew the negative attention of European settlers. In 1898 the West Coast Times noted:

To the Caucasian mind it savours something of a sacrilege to have the City of the Dead profaned by the display and eating of large quantities of food, the letting off of crackers and the burning of paper, and those who have relatives and friends buried in the vicinity of the Chinese complain bitterly of the litter and ugly confusion surrounding the graves of those dear to them.

In addition to headstones inscribed in Chinese, these practices emphasised their distinctive cultural roots and community identity. The assertion of ethnic identity by others may also have been as simple as the carving of an English rose, and Irish shamrock or a Scottish thistle, a statement of the county of nativity, or the prominent use of a Scottish or Polish surname. Despite the relatively homogeneous material culture of the nineteenth century New Zealand burial ground, there was still much scope for the assertion of the ethnic identities of a diverse population.

Religion, or rather religious belief, was another significant influence in shaping the nineteenth century New Zealand burial ground. David Sopher refers to the cemetery as a formal positive expression of religion on the land. This appraisal is

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34 Peter Read, Enter the Crypt: A Brief Look at Some of the Famous and not so Famous Residents of Hokitika’s Seaview Cemetery (Hokitika: West Coast Historical Museum, 1999), 13.
35 It is possible that the Chinese preferred sites, such as hillsides, which enhanced Feng Shui, such as the hillside Chinese section in Dunedin’s Southern Cemetery. Richard Meyer has observed that Chinese practices were carried to America. For example, “highly particularized landscape features such as the Feng Shui (geomancy) pattern [are] observable in certain traditional Chinese cemeteries of Hawaii and the Pacific Northwest.” Meyer, 161.
36 Of course, not everyone was consciously attempting to assert their ethnicity and differentiate themselves from the rest of the population or align themselves with a particular group.
valid not only for cemeteries where religious affiliation is clear but also for those of a non-sectarian nature. Religious belief is expressed in several ways in the landscape of the colonial New Zealand cemetery: in the fact that they exist, in the sectarian divisions, and in the rich abundance of religious symbolism, sculpture and inscription.

New Zealand colonial society is often described as being relatively ‘secular’. ‘Low’ church attendance rates are cited as evidence for this. Rather than an indication of secularism, Miles Fairburn argues that such rates are indications of ‘atomisation’ and an absence of community in colonial New Zealand. Low attendance rates, therefore, may have been due to the simple fact that many people were unable to attend a church because of distance. As Belich notes, however, these figures could be interpreted as quite high. Also, church attendance is no indication of belief, and low numbers of churchgoers does not equal widespread non-belief. Nor do high numbers of churchgoers equate to widespread faith. Some people attended church merely out of notions of ‘respectability’. In 1892 George Hall, the minister at Waihola, voiced concerns that some young people who had applied for confirmation "were taking this step largely to please their parents or from a feeling that it was respectable to be church members."

Graham argues that one must recognise "the increasing association of church-going with Victorian notions of respectability." The cemetery was certainly an important and final forum for asserting respectability, and it is possible that for this reason it contains assertions of religious allegiance. Whether or not church attendance, declaration of religious affiliation, and the use of religious verse and symbolism in the cemetery arose from sincere belief or feelings of respectability is, however, irrelevant. Christianity was obviously an important cultural value, and in either case a fascinating explanation lies behind the presence of religion in the landscape of the historic New Zealand cemetery.

38 George Hall, quoted in Clarke, 37-38.
39 Graham, 128.
40 That adherence to Christianity out of notions of ‘respectability’ was the case could be seen, if one wanted to, in the standard and repetitive religious quotations found on many nineteenth century headstones.
In support of the view that church attendance has little relevance to the presence of religion in the land, Clarke observes that religion does not confine itself to the Church, and is active in many spheres of life.\(^{41}\) One of these spheres in nineteenth century New Zealand was death. As noted above, in the time of crisis occasioned by the death of a family member, immigrants relied on familiar customs and rites for some form of guidance and comfort. Then, as now, religious belief provided this. Belich argues that death and, in particular, the death of a child “was an important incentive for the maintenance of religious faith – ‘little angels only lent’ – and burying their dead, especially their young dead, increased the migrant sense of belonging.”\(^{42}\) Another religious sphere, therefore, was the burial ground. The nineteenth century New Zealand cemetery, with its numberless religious verses, prayers, sculptures and sectarian divisions, demonstrates this, and contradicts any notion of secularism.\(^{43}\)

That the colony would be a Christian country was one of the ‘self-evident truths’ which Graham argues found expression in the developing society,\(^{44}\) not least of all in the material culture of its burial grounds. No settlement was without its church, often surrounded in rural areas by a graveyard. Rather than there being an absence of religion in New Zealand, Clarke argues that:

Religion pervaded colonial life, and remained an important factor in all public events. Whether they were regular churchgoers or not, the great majority of colonists held certain religious beliefs, for example, that God controlled the natural world.”\(^{45}\)

Colonial New Zealand, argues Graham, “had its share of atheists and agnostics, yet the weight of evidence suggests that the majority of immigrants came with the sense that their God was coming with them.”\(^{46}\) In Census returns from the last thirty years of the nineteenth century consistently less than five per cent of New Zealand’s European population stated no religious affiliation or declined stating their beliefs.\(^{47}\)

\(^{41}\) Clarke, 11.
\(^{42}\) Belich, 397.
\(^{43}\) Even a quick stroll through any of New Zealand’s historic cemeteries negates any notion that nineteenth century New Zealand was a secular society.
\(^{44}\) Graham, 120.
\(^{45}\) Clarke, ii.
\(^{46}\) Graham, 127.
\(^{47}\) Ibid. In 1881 the three main denominations were Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Catholics, which contributed respectively 41, 23 and 14 per cent of New Zealand’s religious makeup. Angela McCarthy, "How different it is from home": Comparisons Between New Zealand and Ireland as Reflected in
Many Pakeha had, indeed, brought God with them. The efforts to promote the settlement of the colony by the New Zealand Company in the 1840s were based on clearly defined policies of selection. Hard-working rural labourers and cultured men of capital were regarded as the two most desirable groups for the formation of a Better Britain. The Otago and Canterbury Associations added religious criteria as well, being Presbyterian and Church of England respectively. It is commonly agreed that the rituals of a society represent the common and generally held beliefs and values of its members. The religious beliefs and values of the settlers in nineteenth century New Zealand found material expression in the rituals and landscapes of the cemeteries they created.

The religions of colonial New Zealand, which include Christianity in all its denominational forms, and the Jewish and Chinese faiths, all regarded burial spaces as necessary. Sopher observes that:

The allocations of space needed for the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim institution of burial in a community ground distinguish these religions from the Hindu, Buddhist, and Japanese, where the dead are cremated. The Chinese, who bury their dead and commemorate them, are at variance with other Oriental religions. It has been suggested that a relationship exists between a sense of history and the custom of marked burial in civilised societies; Hindu-Buddhist cremation would fit civilisations with an ahistorical, 'cyclical' world-view.

The practice of burial and memorialisation in nineteenth century New Zealand was, therefore, an expression of the religious, and ethnic, heritage of its inhabitants.

For Christians burial was not merely traditional, it was necessary for successful resurrection of the body. The practice of burial, and opposition to cremation in the second half of the nineteenth century, reflected the fact that the doctrine of resurrection continued to form part of mainstream Christian belief. The

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Personal Letters", in *The Irish in New Zealand: Historical Contexts and Perspectives*, ed. Brad Patterson (Wellington: Victoria University of Wellington, 2002), 46. Clarke notes that in the 1871 “Results of a Census of the Colony of New Zealand” religious allegiance to Presbyterian, Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, Pagans and Heathens, Baptist, Protestant (unspecified) Congregational, Lutheran, Jewish and Other denominations was given. Clarke, 33.

48 Graham, 114.
49 Lawrence, ii.
51 Belief in resurrection was one of the reasons the reintroduction of cremation was opposed in the nineteenth century.
doctrine of resurrection continued to hold a place of importance in colonial New Zealand. At the burial of the Premier John Ballance in 1893 in Wanganui the officiating minister said to the mourners “We have committed his body to the grave, there to remain till the general resurrection.” The simple act of burial, therefore, reflected the influence of religious attitudes toward death on burial practices. It was also eloquently expressive of the Christian core on which New Zealand society was founded.

Although a Christian country, the land which received these immigrants was one with no established church. This would greatly influence the cemeteries and burial grounds of the new land. Although public cemeteries were coming into vogue in Britain, these were mainly located in London, and for most people the only available place of burial was in an exclusively Anglican churchyard. Regardless of the faith of the deceased the rites of the Anglican church and burial in consecrated soil was the only option. Travelling through Wellington in 1841, John Newland assumed that the same situation existed in New Zealand when he spoke of two burials as having taken place “in the burial ground of the Church Estd.” He was mistaken, however. New Zealand, as a Better Britain, would not have an established church, or offer only Anglican churchyard burial grounds. Charlotte Godley observed while in Wellington in 1850 “they have begun at once here not burying in the churchyards.” This was not only for hygienic, but religious reasons. Special privileges were not granted to one denomination over the other and “local reaction was immediate whenever this principle of equality appeared to be under threat.”

Wellington’s Bolton Street Cemetery was intended to be a public and unconsecrated burying place. Jonas Woodward, the first Congregational minister in Wellington, strenuously opposed plans to consecrate part of the public cemetery by the Church of England which had already received non-episcopalian dead. In a passionate letter to Governor Fitzroy he pointed out the significance of the fact that the New Zealand Company had provided a cemetery for the burial of the people of

53 John Newland, quoted in Aitungton, Unquiet Earth, 10.
55 Graham, 127.
Wellington, rather than individual burial grounds in churchyards. This, he felt, was important in remaining free from the "shackles of an established church". The issue was close to the hearts of dissenters and non-conformists. Other denominations were equally opposed to being buried in unconsecrated ground, most notably the Anglicans and Jews. In the end the cemetery was divided up into three separate areas: the Jewish section, the Anglican section, which was consecrated in 1855, and the public section, in which were interred the bodies of non-conformists. The intense emotions which resulted in the division of the Bolton Street Cemetery clearly indicate that religion was not something immigrants left in Britain. Strong religious feelings, and the desire to be buried in the ground belonging to one's own faith resulted in the sectarian or denominational divisions which are so characteristic of our nineteenth century cemeteries.

Like the cemeteries which sprang up throughout Britain in the 1850s and 1860s New Zealand's cemeteries would be non-, or more commonly, multi-denominational. The dead could be buried by clergymen from their own church, according to the rites and doctrine of their faith. Traditional churchyard burial grounds were also established in New Zealand, reflecting both the transition from churchyard to cemetery in Britain, and the continued importance of religion in the community, particularly in dealing with death. Although they may not have been governed by an established church, and were often created and maintained by municipal authorities, New Zealand's cemeteries were far from non-religious in character. Rather, with no established church, the New Zealand cemetery was capable of expressing religious affiliation and diversity in a way in which the exclusively Anglican churchyards of Britain never were. Ethnicity and religion were closely connected, which meant sectarian divisions could often roughly equate to ethnic divisions. The Irish, for example, in New Zealand were seventy-five per cent or more Roman Catholic while Scots were overwhelmingly Presbyterian.

56 Jonas Woodward, quoted in Alington, Unquiet Earth, 22.
57 These terms included Congregationalists, Methodists and Presbyterians and were used in England to describe members of sects who had separated from the established Church, or Church of England. Although New Zealand had no established church, the terms remained in use.
58 In Wellington the Roman Catholics had their own cemetery in Mount Street.
59 However, as a caution against generalising about the relationship between ethnicity and religion Alasdair Galbraith provides the example of Thomas Moore, a staunch Irish Presbyterian settler in Pukekohe who led lay-services in his home, and who also belonged to the local Anglican Church. He notes that "This flexibility effectively negates any attempt to neatly demarcate people by denomination,
In some cases religious and ethnic concentrations, at times united with the impact of significant events, and economic or occupational ties, combined to give New Zealand’s provinces distinct identities. This gave cemeteries some degree of regional character. Apart from ethnicity and religion, Richard Meyer notes in relation to American cemeteries that:

A whole host of other considerations have also had their part in shaping the distinctive regional characteristics of American cemeteries – climate, topography, economic and occupational ties, events of major impact, to name but a few – and evidences of all of these may read by those who take the time to look for them. 61

New Zealand’s cemeteries are not so distinctive from region to region as in America with its vast land mass and diverse population. A stable Pakeha population, and the fact that most people had access to the mass produced material trappings of death, and followed the same fashions impeded the development of a strong regional flavour. The same verse and style of headstone can be found from Russell to Bluff. Despite this, various factors produced some degree of regional variation among New Zealand’s nineteenth century cemeteries. Thomas Hannon has observed, “the cemetery is a cultural landscape that, more than any other, represents the totality of the locale or region in which it is located.” 62 Regionally distinctive influences and characteristics, therefore, come through despite the superficial homogeneity of our historic cemeteries. 63
The most common way in which a burial ground became regionally characteristic was through the combination and concentration of ethnicity and religion. This gave the area or region a special flavour which both shaped and was reflected in the cemetery. Particular areas of New Zealand were characterised by denominational concentrations which might be closely aligned with ethnic concentrations. In the Province of Otago, for example, the Presbyterian Scottish settlers reigned supreme, particularly prior to the gold rushes of the 1860s, with the English denominations, Anglicanism and Methodism, well outnumbered.\(^{64}\) This is reflected in Dunedin’s Southern Cemetery. Opened by Captain Cargill in 1858, the general portion, being reserved for everyone who was not Anglican, Roman Catholic, Jewish or Chinese, became known as the Presbyterian section. It was also the largest sectarian division in the cemetery. Marlborough, Canterbury, and Taranaki contained large Anglican populations, of up to 50 per cent.\(^{65}\) The predominance of the English in New Plymouth is reflected in its early burial ground. Land marked on the town plan as a reserve for the city was used for an Anglican Church and burial ground. Catholics were present in substantial amounts in Westland.\(^{66}\) In 1881 they made up 32 per cent of that region’s population. They were predominantly Irish, and their presence in this part of New Zealand is reflected in the large number of Catholic graves, such as those in Hokitika.\(^{67}\) Other smaller ethnic-religious groups also gave a unique flavour to our historic cemeteries. These include the concentration of Polish Roman Catholics in Allanton, south of Dunedin, or the Lutheran Scandinavians of Palmerston North and surrounding districts. Many of these people came out in the 1870s as assisted immigrants, establishing tightly-knit communities whose ethnic and religious identity shaped the cultural landscape of the cemetery.

In some areas the presence of ethnic and religious characteristics was related to occupational and economic factors, and major events. The rush to the goldfields of Central Otago, which began in 1861, produced a cosmopolitan frontier population including American and Australian diggers, Germans and Italians, Irish and English, Lebanese and Welsh. After 1866 the Chinese were also represented. The Jews were another group which had a strong presence in goldmining districts, with many

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\(^{64}\) Clarke, 31.
\(^{65}\) McCarthy, 46.
\(^{66}\) Ibid.
\(^{67}\) Read, 9.
establishing themselves as merchants in frontier towns. Many small historic goldfield cemeteries of Otago and Westland, such as those at Lawrence and Hokitika, contain nineteenth century Chinese and Jewish graves, with their distinctively inscribed tombstones sometimes the only reminder of their once thriving communities. The presence of these ethnic-religious groups meant that many goldfields cemeteries in Otago and Westland were divided into sectarian divisions which included Church of England, Roman Catholic, General, Jewish, and Chinese areas, as at Hokitika.

The cemeteries established by gold rush communities also reflect the unique histories and conditions of these regions. Celestina Sagazio has argued that in Australia “Goldfields cemeteries...reflect the rapid historical and cultural developments and upheavals of the period.” The burial grounds of the gold fields speak of the dangerous and harsh conditions, both environmental and social, which the miners endured. The harsh winters and violent rivers of Otago and the West Coast claimed many lives through drowning, exhaustion, malnutrition, and exposure. The gravestones of goldfield cemeteries record the death and hardship experienced by these men and women. In addition to gold town cemeteries, Otago is littered with lone graves, many now unmarked, where people were buried close to the scene of death. Death from drowning, rock falls, or disease in areas far from a settlement and its burial ground meant that many people were simply buried where they died. The gold rushes had a localised impact, producing distinctive ‘goldfield’ cemeteries. The ‘boom and bust’ nature of the gold rushes means that today these isolated cemeteries are often the only reminder of once thriving communities, which have now disappeared.

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68 Read notes that “The remains of a once thriving Jewish community that established itself in Hokitika in the early gold rush years can be seen near the entrance to the cemetery.” Members of this community included Michael Albert Cassius. A Polish Jew, he arrived in 1864 and became known as the ‘Rothschild of Hokitika’ on account of the terrific wealth he amassed. Cassius returned to Europe with his fortune in 1874, dying in Prussia in 1891. A particularly handsome memorial, erected by the Masonic Lodge, immortalises John Lazar, who had been Mayor of Adelaide and Dunedin Town Clerk before becoming Hokitika Town Clerk. An actor and singer of some repute, and a prominent Masonic Lodge member, he died in 1879. Read, 11.

69 Sagazio, 82.

70 Peter Chandler, “Deaths and Burials in the Shotover” (Misc-MS-0073), Hocken Library, University of Otago.

71 Such graves are not limited to Otago, but can be found anywhere a combination of danger and isolation faced early settlers and explorers.

72 There are other examples of the relationship between occupational ties, ethnicity, religion and the development of regionally distinctive cemeteries. Belich notes “Methodism is said to have still been over-represented in mining districts in the twentieth century because of their attraction to chapelgoing
The New Zealand Wars of the nineteenth century are another example of a major event(s) which contributed to the shaping of some of New Zealand’s cemeteries in particular regions. Conflict, often violent, between Maori and the settlers was a feature of colonial life from the 1840s into the 1880s. Skirmishes at Wairau in 1843 and around Wellington in the 1840s, and the 1845 ‘Northern War’ in the Bay of Islands foreshadowed the wars which erupted in Taranaki in 1860. Fighting in Taranaki and Waikato lasted for much of the 1860s, and was particularly bloody. Although the New Zealand Wars are often said to have ended in 1872 with the end of the chase of Te Kooti, Nigel Prickett also includes the Parihaka Campaign of 1880-81. The wars, therefore, covered a large amount of time and space. In the struggle for land and sovereignty the landscape of parts of the North Island was radically altered, with the construction of redoubts, stockades, roads, buildings and burial grounds.

Class, wealth and status, and their material expression in colonial New Zealand also influenced the development of the cemetery. Just as there has been debate over the extent to which New Zealand was a secular society in the nineteenth century, so too has there been debate among New Zealand historians as to the degree in which ‘class’ was present in colonial society. Miles Fairburn denies the existence of class and of hierarchy in New Zealand. However, although New Zealand was touted as an egalitarian colony, it must be remembered that egalitarianism was not inconsistent with notions of class. Egalitarian rhetoric in New Zealand did not deny class, but emphasised equality before the law. Oppressive class distinctions were opposed and opportunities for promotion and advancement were demanded. Erik Olssen has identified the existence of a working class in industrialised Dunedin. Graham argues “Class distinction was fundamental to the Victorian social attitudes being imported. The division of the boat into cabin and steerage quarters prevented the mixing necessary for a modification of such views.”74 Such a view implies that English notions of class remained unmodified in the colonial environment. Rather,

Belich 439. Another example is the largely Lutheran Scandinavian settlers who came to fell the forests of the North Island in the nineteenth century. This heritage is reflected in the cemeteries of the Manawatu and the Wairarapa.

74 Graham, 118.
class and hierarchy were less rigid in New Zealand than in Britain, and were based on wealth rather than birth and culture. They still existed, however; Belich notes that master was still master and Jack was still Jack.\textsuperscript{75}

Brown argues “the cemetery reflects prevailing hierarchies as faithfully as any other institution”.\textsuperscript{76} The material culture of New Zealand’s burial grounds indicates that not everyone was equal in wealth or status in the nineteenth century. The 1880s’ recession revealed great inequalities in the settler society of New Zealand. As Graham notes, “the much vaunted levelling process for which the colony was famed was now something of a myth. Social divisions did exist and they were based upon wealth.”\textsuperscript{77} Jeremy Salmond argues that “In colonial New Zealand wealth, not class, decided how people were housed.”\textsuperscript{78} The same principle applied to how people were buried.\textsuperscript{79} Just as nineteenth century New Zealand houses range from the mansion, to the villa, and down to the cottage, colonial tombs range from the mausoleum and grand monument, to the mass-produced headstone, or no stone at all. Although, as Mary Ann Martin noted in the nineteenth century, there was less need to ‘cut a dash on the Tompkins’ here in New Zealand than in England, Pakeha New Zealanders were still not free from status anxiety.\textsuperscript{80} A decent appearance in death, for both the deceased and family, was important, as recalled by the experience of Amelia Howe around 1900:

At last the day of the funeral came. We rose early. During the last two days we had been busy making black dresses. Today we put them on for the first time. We all hated black, it didn’t suit us, and we were appalled at the idea of wearing it for the next six months, but we knew that was the custom and we dared not refuse.\textsuperscript{81}

This is not compatible with a society free from ‘appearance anxiety’.\textsuperscript{82} New Zealanders were advised on what to wear by etiquette books such as that sub-titled \textit{The Rules and Usages of the Best Society in the Australasian Colonies} (1885). Like

\textsuperscript{75} Belich, 321.
\textsuperscript{76} John Gary Brown, 3.
\textsuperscript{77} Graham, 114.
\textsuperscript{78} Jeremy Salmond, \textit{Old New Zealand Houses 1800-1940} (Auckland: Reed, 1986), 73.
\textsuperscript{79} Other factors did influence the size of a monument. A wealthy person may still have preferred a simpler grave. A poor person may have saved for an expensive monument. More than one person may have contributed to the erection of a monument, while the availability of monuments and masons were other factors.
\textsuperscript{80} Belich, 324. This was probably particularly so in towns.
\textsuperscript{81} David Arbury, \textit{Funerals on the Goldfield} (Thames: Metallum Research, 2001), n.p.
\textsuperscript{82} Amelia Howe’s story also illustrates the continued force of British custom in the colony.
mourning costume, a monument of decent size and style was seen as a necessity, not a luxury. Monuments erected by wealthy families were also statements which legitimised their monetary wealth, status, and culture, or, in short, their class. Social competition, gradations of wealth, and class differences were given material form in New Zealand’s cemeteries.

Also given material expression in the cemetery were the cultural values and ideologies of the young country, such as the widespread ownership of individual private property. This has persisted into the present day as the characteristic ‘Kiwi’ desire to own one’s own home. For nineteenth century New Zealanders, argues Graham, “The possession of land in itself was an accepted common goal.” As New Zealand was parcelled out and cut up into privately owned portions our cities, suburbs and countryside came to be composed of clearly demarcated privately owned sections. So did our cemeteries. One of the most striking features of the historic New Zealand cemetery is the abundance of enclosed privately owned plots. Kenneth Hudson notes, “The Victorians were strong believers in privacy, both in their homes and in their cemeteries.” Typical of the New Zealand dwelling was its tendency to stand alone, on its own piece of enclosed land, with its design, colour scheme and garden dictated by the individual taste of its owner. Like the New Zealand house, the New Zealand grave was a self-contained and privately owned feature of the landscape which allowed for full expression of individual taste in a public sphere, while retaining a sense of privacy.

The importance of the individual in society, and of recognising individual success, contributed to the widespread use of monuments in New Zealand’s nineteenth century cemeteries. New Zealand was, at least in theory and rhetoric, the place for the hard-working and honest man and woman to advance themselves through the application of labour and merit. Graham notes, “From Otago came the stern admonition that if a workman did not succeed and prosper, it would be his own fault.” The ownership of property was seen as a measure of success. Both the house you lived in and the tomb in which you were buried were material expressions

83 Edgar, 84.
84 Graham, 138.
85 Hudson, 36.
86 Graham, 115.
of achievement. Those who failed, according to the ‘Protestant work ethic’ of New Zealand, such as paupers and lunatics, received no permanent stone to immortalise their lives. Many immigrants were from labouring and lower-middle-class backgrounds, in which a decent funeral and monument were considered essential in the Victorian era. Often emphasising the obvious success of those who did succeed were the headstone inscriptions which detailed individual achievement through the naming of occupation, awards, lodge membership or status in the community.

Despite this individualism people were rarely buried alone. As in England, the individual was often placed in the context of the family. Despite the large number of transient single men often stated to be roaming around colonial New Zealand, the family was a very important component of society. Belich argues seventy-five per cent of Pakeha New Zealand in 1874 was made up of nuclear families. The large proportion of family graves in historic cemeteries, and the presence of the private family burial ground reflect this.

The notion of the individual and of success through self-help was closely connected with the proudly advertised cultural value of egalitarianism. This powerful ideology also shaped the cultural landscape of the nineteenth and early twentieth century cemetery. Although Wakefield intended to found a country led by a privileged class of moneyed gentry, the ideology of egalitarianism has always been held dear by New Zealanders as a part of their unique way life. With egalitarianism having been proven to be something of a myth by the recession of the 1880s, New Zealanders began consciously to live up to what Graham calls the “cherished colonial ethos of open community for all.” This found full expression in the Liberal government of the 1890s. In the wake of their egalitarian forms Philip Edgar argues there was a reluctance to erect elaborate monuments. Edgar’s study of the Presbyterian portion of Dunedin’s Southern Cemetery revealed “a reduction of visible social stratification ... at a time when egalitarian principles were being espoused.”

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87 Belich, 417. The individual and family could then be located within the context of the religious and/or ethnic divisions, which were in turn part of the total cemetery, or wider community. Therefore, the cemetery was an expression of the many levels of identity an individual could possess: in relation to family, ethnicity, religion and the wider population.
88 Of course, this is not unique, with Australia thinking very much the same thing about itself.
89 Graham, 140.
90 Edgar, 91.
Figure 23. Pictured in the early twentieth century, Te Whiti’s tomb at Parihaka is an example of the use of European forms of commemoration to indicate mana and esteem of an individual in Maori society.

Price Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.
Reference Number: 1/1-001268-G.

Figure 24. The monument erected over the grave of Tamati Waka Nene in Christ Church churchyard, Russell.

Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.
Reference Number: F68328 ½.
Figure 25. This 1877 engraving shows the European style monument erected over the grave of Te Puni at Petone. A Te Ati Awa chief who died in 1870, Te Puni's mana is indicated through the use of a stone memorial in a fashionable style, which contrasts with the crude wooden structures in the urupa.

This meant that early in the twentieth century gravestones began to simplify. According to egalitarianism, assertions of privilege were resented, and one place in which these were most visible was the cemetery. Monuments, therefore, became smaller. While in Britain the mass death of World War One and the simple headstones mass-produced by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission started a trend towards a new and simpler form of memorialisation, in New Zealand uniquely colonial processes were at work as well. The cemetery in New Zealand was not only the product of political values, it also helped to give concrete expression to these notions.

Maori were not standing idly by while the Pakeha settlers went about their business of felling trees, constructing houses and buildings, establishing farms and businesses and generally transforming the landscape. Maori society continued to evolve in response to these developments, engaging with new ideas and technologies. At the same time, particularly after the conflicts of the 1860s, Maori retreated from increased contact with the growing Pakeha population in an effort to preserve cultural values. This engagement with and retreating from European influences meant that aspects of Maori burial practices changed while others remained essentially the same. This process was really a continuation of the pattern observable prior to 1840, and was characterised by the incorporation of the Pakeha material culture of death within the context of the tangihanga. On the surface, therefore, as the nineteenth century progressed urupa more and more resembled Pakeha cemeteries. European style headstones, worked in stone, became symbols which marked the mana of the deceased, as in the cases of Te Whiti, Tamati Waka Nene and Te Puni (Figures 23, 24, and 25). The headstone also became an integral component of a uniquely Maori practice which evolved from the tangihanga of the early nineteenth century. This was the unveiling. The unveiling of the headstone a year after death, which remains an important ritual today, originated in the nineteenth century. It was a substitute for the ritual of hahunga, which traditionally took place about a year after the death of the individual. The unveiling of the headstone allowed for the second mourning period which the exhumation and display of the bones before final interment once did.

It is impossible, or, rather, misleading to generalise about the degree to which Maori burial practices changed and continued, as the experience differed throughout
the country between iwi and hapu. During the nineteenth century, at least twenty-nine Maori were buried in Wellington’s Bolton Street Cemetery. Maori were encouraged to bury their dead within New Zealand’s first modern cemetery by the Commissioner for the Management of Native Reserves, Edmund Halswell. He considered himself successful, writing in 1842 that:

They now look back with abhorrence on the barbarous custom of burying the dead bodies of their people within the pahs...Their funerals are now conducted with great decency, and present an appearance which would not disgrace a better community. I intend, if possible, to take up the bodies of twelve natives, buried at Te Aro pah by the Wesleyan minister during the former year, and have them interred in the cemetery. The natives, if not interfered with, would be much gratified by such a proceeding.

The readiness of Maori in the district to be buried in the Bolton Street Cemetery was probably due to the fact that they were Te Ati Awa, originally from Taranaki, who had only recently settled in the area. They had, therefore, no ancestral urupa in the area. Of course, not all Maori were willing to be buried in the cemetery. The last sentence of Halswell’s quote suggests that the reinterment of bodies in the cemetery would be undertaken surreptitiously, and then revealed. Among iwi who inhabited their ancestral lands and whose tribal and hapu structures remained intact, the use of traditional urupa continued, especially before the urbanisation of the twentieth century. The continued importance of whakapapa in Maori cosmology is reflected by the fact that in many cases each descent group still has its own section of the urupa.

It is possible that those buried in the cemetery were also Christian Maori, for whom burial in ‘Gods Acre’ was more attractive than burial in the pa. Christianity continued to influence the change of Maori burial practices throughout the nineteenth century, by both altering material practices, and the rationale behind these. Elsdon Best noted early in the twentieth century that many Maori burial customs, and other

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92 Ibid. Alington argues the New Zealand Company’s anxiety to lessen Maori attachment to their pa sites within the developing town no doubt lay behind these efforts.
94 The members of the Te Ati Awa iwi in the Wellington area had come south as allies of Ngati Toa under Te Rauparaha. Lady Fleming, “Maori Burials” (MS-Papers-2260-114), Alexander Turnbull Library.
95 Email from Jim Williams to Stephen Deed, 4 November 2003.
customs related to death, had been modified with the introduction of Christianity. Christianity, for example, ended the custom of preserving heads which had been done out of affection for the dead. The last case of this occurring, of which Best knew, took place in the eastern part of New Zealand in 1865.

The development of the modern marae in the nineteenth century also influenced the urupa. The marae that evolved during this period often had their associated burial ground. Jim Williams notes that “Every marae has at least one and there are many old urupa both near marae and away off where seasonal camps were.” Marae became strongholds of tikanga Maori, places where traditional Maori practices continued to be used. They were also places where European technologies were incorporated into a Maori heritage. Just as Maori meeting houses in the nineteenth century contained glazed sash windows and four panel doors, so their urupa contained weeping angels and marble headstones. These urupa were no less tapu of course, as these changes were incorporated within a Maori world view. The Te Kuiti marae, which is centred on Te Tokanganui-a-Noho wharenui is the focal point for Ngati Maniapoto. Adjoining the marae is a spectacular hillside urupa, whose marble angels contrast with the Maori carving of the meeting house. At a cursory glance, it does not greatly differ from Pakeha burial grounds of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The fact that it is attached to a marae, however, indicates that it is the result of significantly different processes.

One of these processes was the fusion of traditional notions of burial with Pakeha material culture in order to legitimate the Maori presence on the land in the eyes of the rest of New Zealand. This meant that urupa, which were traditionally kept hidden, became, in the nineteenth century, more visible features of the landscape. Danny Keenan argues:

Turbulent change, substantially arising from colonisation, affected Maori at every level of society in the nineteenth century. Underpinning this was the transformation of the land into which Maori society and culture had long been firmly anchored. Maori people

97 Ibid., 35.
98 Ibid., 37.
99 Email from Jim Williams to Stephen Deed, 4 November 2003.
responded to this change in many ways, but perhaps most markedly by reaching back into ancient knowledge in order emphatically to locate a presence and legitimacy on the land.»100

For Maori burial had long meant rights to the land in which they were buried. Urupa that were visible to many people, therefore, asserted their mana whenua. This 'reaching back into ancient knowledge' was fused with the use of Pakeha mortuary architecture. Located in more prominent locations, and featuring stone monuments such as those in Figures 23-25., urupa now served to establish a visible presence and legitimacy on the land, based as it always had been on whakapapa and ancestral remains. Although still highly tapu, urupa established in the nineteenth century were no longer always hidden. They became visible components of the landscape, often attached to a marae, with their 'visibility' enhanced by the adoption of the European material culture of death in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.101

As well as differences between Maori and Pakeha burial grounds, there also existed some difference between cemeteries in rural areas and urban centres. Throughout the nineteenth century Maori were increasingly associated with rural areas, as they as they retreated from contact and established marae. At the same time Pakeha New Zealand was becoming increasingly urban. This formed one part of a rural-urban dichotomy. Despite Wakefield's plans for a rural society, Pakeha New Zealand was always a relatively urban society, its settlement being based on the establishment of 'instant townships'. By 1881 some forty per cent of Pakeha lived in towns of over 1000, with another fifteen per cent in smaller settlements.102 To some degree rural and urban cemeteries differed, most notably in size, design and type. In rural areas the churchyard as place of burial persisted throughout the nineteenth century. This reflected the importance of the Church in rural communities, and the fact that rural communities were also more isolated and perhaps tended to adhere to the traditional practices of the settlers. Also, rural churches tended to sit alone and have ample space for burial, while burial around a church located in town was generally considered unwholesome.

101 Other factors may have contributed to the increased 'visibility' of Maori urupa: such as the decline of the need to protect them through secrecy from marauding enemies. This had been one of the main reasons for the burial of bones in hidden caves.
102 Belich, 418.
Urban cemeteries tended to be established on a greater scale than rural and small town cemeteries, primarily because of the sizes of the populations they served. This meant that larger urban cemeteries often incorporated the fashionable picturesque elements of British and American cemetery design. In rural areas cemeteries tended to be more utilitarian in design, often employing a grid format, if they were planned at all. Many rural or small town cemeteries often have fewer early monuments. This is not merely a reflection of a later date of establishment, but is due to the isolation of these places which limited the availability of monuments from larger centres. Many of these early rural and small town cemeteries continue to receive the dead of the surrounding districts today, just as they have for the past 100 or so years.

The material landscape of the nineteenth century New Zealand cemetery was the product of diverse influences. Timing was one of these. The annexation of Aotearoa by Britain in 1840 meant that New Zealand was settled during a period of transition in British burial practices. The early decades of settlement saw the establishment of both churchyard burial grounds and modern public cemeteries. The people who came here, through the assertion of their religious, ethnic and cultural allegiances, practices and identities then shaped the landscapes of these burial grounds. The shared heritage of the churchyard and experience of the modern cemetery was used by English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh settlers as a common forum for expressing religious and ethnic identity, as it was by other ethnic and religious groups, including the Chinese and Jewish communities. Occasionally ethnicity, religion and major events or occupational ties combined to give a region and its cemeteries a distinctive flavour or regional characteristics, as in the cemeteries on the Otago and West Coast gold fields. The cemeteries of nineteenth century New Zealand were also architectural expressions of the political interests of their time, notably the related ideologies of individualism and egalitarianism. Cemeteries differed between rural and urban centres. In the countryside, the churchyard persisted as a place of burial. Rural cemeteries tended also to be smaller than their urban counterparts. Another aspect of the rural-urban dichotomy was the fact that Maori burial grounds were predominantly rural, while urban cemeteries were Pakeha dominated. For Maori during the period after 1840 burial practices were again characterised by change and continuity. Although some began to be buried in the
modern cemeteries of the new towns, most Maori continued to be buried in urupa associated with Maori settlements. Changes such as the greater use of the headstone and the creation of urupa associated with marae, and the development of the unveiling demonstrate that Maori society engaged with the ideas and technologies of Pakeha New Zealand, while incorporating these within a specifically Maori context. The cemetery in New Zealand, therefore, came to be an accurate expression of the society which built them, developing characteristics in response to the historic, cultural and geographic circumstances of the colony. Now we will see how nineteenth century burial grounds were established, used and abused, maintained and regarded by colonial New Zealanders, and how this affected the development of the material culture we see today.
Chapter Four

Miasmatic Fevers and Spooning Couples:
Establishing and Using the Cemetery in Nineteenth Century
New Zealand.

Walking down New Plymouth’s Vivian Street in the August of 1860 one might have noticed the bullocks of H. M. Commissariat grazing in Saint Mary’s churchyard and the white picket fences erected around graves to prevent their being trampled. The cemetery was a place for the living, as much as the dead. The functions of the nineteenth century cemetery, as burial place, recreational ground, scene of remembrance, funeral location and grazing area, were directly responsible for the material culture and physical elements we see in its landscape today. Siting, planting, layout, and monument design combined to create a fashionable and melancholy public recreational burying space. The ways in which cemeteries were established, through the Church, local bodies or individuals, determined what type of cemeteries and burial places developed in nineteenth century New Zealand. Their establishment and design were governed to some degree by legislation. Colonial legislation relating to cemeteries is analysed with reference to its influence on the establishment and design of burial grounds. Nineteenth century indigenous and settler attitudes toward the cemetery were also influential. While Maori considered burial grounds tapu and of great spiritual significance, Pakeha burial grounds and cemeteries during this period were often unkempt. Regarded as sources of corruption and disease, contemporary medical thought also helped to influence the siting and design of our cemeteries. The availability of the Pakeha material culture of death, as well as the appropriation of international designs and ideas relating to cemetery design, also shaped the nineteenth century burial places we see today.

Early burial grounds were often established on donated land. In 1861 Thomas Stubbs, a resident of Riccarton, Christchurch, donated one acre of his fifty acre Crown Grant to the Wesleyan Church. On this land a chapel was erected and a burial

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ground laid out. Early cemeteries in rural areas often established on the initiative of the local population or congregation, which accounts for the number of rural churchyard burial grounds. Christ Church in the Hutt Valley, which sits in a churchyard burial ground of one acre, was built in 1854 on land donated by Algernon Tollemache to the local Anglican congregation in 1852. In other cases isolated families and individuals created their own burial grounds. When Martha Adam's infant became ill, her nine-year-old son asked, "Mother, where must I dig the grave for the baby, up the valley?" In this way remote family burial grounds and individual graves were established. The New Zealand Company, the Church, individuals, families, indigenous and immigrant communities and local bodies were all active in the establishment of burial grounds in the nineteenth century. This meant that different types of burial grounds developed in New Zealand, from the family burial ground, to the large municipal cemetery. In the early Wakefield ‘instant townships’ land had often been set-aside on the original town plan for burial, as in the case of Wellington. In other instances reserves were appropriated for the purpose of interment, either by a church or local body, as in New Plymouth and Dunedin.

Local governing bodies established many cemeteries, and burial grounds established by the Church were quite rare. This followed contemporary trends in Britain where the new public cemeteries, at first the creation of private companies, were later the products of municipal endeavour. In England, the 1850 Metropolitan Interments Act, the first in a long series of Burial Acts, gave the Board of Health power to establish new cemeteries. In New Zealand there was no central body which dealt with the establishment and management of burial grounds. With the provincial system of government in place from 1853 to 1876, New Zealand was divided into six provinces, each possessing its own elected legislature and Superintendent. During this period each separate Provincial Council often undertook the establishment of

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3 From 1882 people were restricted from burying a body if there was a cemetery or burial place within five miles of the place of death or proposed place of interment, unless with the sanction of a Resident Magistrate or two Justices of the Peace. *The Cemeteries Act*, (1882), *New Zealand Statutes*, Wellington, 1882, 534.


5 Hudson, 14

6 This later increased to ten.

7 Belich, 191.
cemeteries. In 1859 the Nelson Provincial Council brought 25 acres for the establishment of a new cemetery at Wakapuaka to replace the small crowded burial grounds in town.8

It was not always clear exactly whose responsibility the establishment and management of a new cemetery was. The Bolton Street Cemetery debacle of the 1870s and 1880s clearly illustrates the confusion over this issue. In 1872 Dr Fitzherbert, the Superintendent for the Province of Wellington, in his opening speech for the session, commented on The Wellington Cemeteries Act which called for the closure of the Bolton Street Cemetery. Doubts arose, however, as to whether the Provincial Council had the authority to close the cemetery. A Bill was then introduced into the General Assembly by Henry Bunny to give the Superintendent this power, resulting in The Burial-Ground Closing Act, (1874). Its implementation, however, depended on the provision of a suitable alternative cemetery site, which the Superintendent of the Province had the responsibility to provide.9 After years of getting no closer to the establishment of a new cemetery because of disagreements between the Government and City Council, the Hon. Donald Reid remarked with exasperation, “I scarcely understand what the Government has to do with this. It is clearly the duty of the municipal authorities to provide and manage cemeteries.”10 Where the responsibility of establishing a new cemetery lay was not clearly defined. As one newspaper editor noted in 1879, “the City Council looks to the Government to take action; the Government regards it as a purely municipal concern.”11 The Cemeteries Act, (1882), established the provision of a new cemetery as a ‘municipal concern’. Wellington’s cemetery issue was resolved in 1891, when rates were used to fund new public cemetery.12

There were many pieces of legislation relating to burial grounds passed in the nineteenth century13, but the Act of 1882 was perhaps the most significant of these.

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9 The Burial-Ground Closing Act, (1874), New Zealand Statutes, Wellington, 1874, 243.
10 Alington, Unquiet Earth, 80.
11 Quoted in Alington, Unquiet Earth, 81.
12 Alington, Unquiet Earth, 87.
13 Some cemeteries were even established through acts of the General Assembly, such as The North Dunedin Cemetery Act, (1872).
The Act repealed many previous Acts, and instilled some sense of uniformity in burial practices throughout New Zealand. It was also influential in determining where and how cemeteries would be established, and how they would look. Following the British example, the Act maintained that no new cemeteries would be established within the limits of any town or borough. It made it "the duty of every local authority to provide a suitable cemetery for the interment of the dead". This resulted in the large Waikumete Cemetery being established in 1886 by the Auckland City Council, and the opening of Wellington's new cemetery at Karori in 1891 by the City Council.

The Act also imposed physical requirements. It set out measures "to prevent the escape of noxious exhalation or evaporation in the cemetery", such as brick lined vaults and drains. Such fears were a real concern, and are discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Cemeteries were to be enclosed by walls, largely in order to keep out wandering cows and sheep. Owners of livestock found in cemetery grounds were to be fined between one and five pounds. Wilful damage, vandalism and indecent behaviour were strictly dealt with through fines for indecent conduct or language, "or plays at any game or sport", the discharging of firearms, and putting up bills.

In spite of their seemingly secular origins, many New Zealand cemeteries retained a strong religious character through the creation of sectarian divisions, which were each maintained by members of that denomination. General operation of the cemetery fell to the Managers or Trustees of the cemetery, which might include local authorities such as county councils, municipal corporations, and town boards. Denominational divisions were created through the application of the governing body of any separate denomination to the Trustees, who could then appropriate and set apart a portion of any cemetery to be used for the exclusive interment of the bodies of members of that denomination. Each denomination had the right to appoint their

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14 The Cemeteries Act, (1882), 530.
15 Ibid., 528.
16 Bridges, 2.
17 The Cemeteries Act, (1882), 525.
18 Ibid., 532
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., 526. "'Governing body of a denomination' means the recognised senior office-bearer thereof respectively in any diocese or district; or, in the absence of the aforesaid person, or there being no such person, any two persons of the same denomination or sect holding therein any of the offices of minister or deacon, churchwarden, church manager, trustee, or other equally responsible office." 526-527.
own guardians of the cemetery, ministers of religion were to have free access, mortuary chapels could be erected at the expense of the denomination in their own part of the cemetery, and consecration of the portion was allowed. Trustees could not interfere with the religious ceremonies or headstones of that denomination and were required to maintain the cemetery. Some cemeteries, such as Bolton Street, were entirely managed by denominational boards of trustees, and were, in practice, a collection of separate sectarian cemeteries.

The 1882 Act ensured that many negative features of Old World cemeteries were not continued in the colonial context. The Act allowed for the establishment of separate sectarian burial-grounds. A group (not less than 25) of adult members of a religious denomination could apply to have any land they had acquired set aside for the exclusive interment of that denomination with the sanction of the Colonial Secretary. Intramural burial within a church or chapel was strictly forbidden. The Act stated “No body shall be buried in any vault under any chapel in any cemetery or burial-ground”. This reflected the banning of intramural burial in Britain during the time New Zealand was being settled. Such developments were discussed in the colony, and in 1852 the New Zealander reported on the “strong feeling which has lately been expressed against intramural interments” in Britain. It also highlighted the fact that New Zealand was a land of wooden churches. Intramural burial had, therefore, never established itself in this country prior to reforms in Britain. In an attempt to escape another negative aspect of British cemeteries, the pauper’s grave, the Act made provision for the burial of “poor persons”. The Trustees of any cemetery were permitted to allow the burial of people unable to pay for their own funeral, as well as those from hospitals, lunatic asylums, gaols, and prisons, free of

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21 The Act differentiates between 'burial-grounds' and 'cemeteries': cemeteries are any place set apart for the interment of the dead generally, irrespective of sect (although these could later be divided), while a burial ground is any place which is not a cemetery according to the above definition.

22 *The Cemeteries Act*, (1882), 530.

23 Ibid.


25 There have been few cases of intramural burial. One of these was the interment of in Christchurch Cathedral of Henry John Chitty Harper, the first Bishop of Christchurch, in the 1890s.

26 In *The Cemeteries Management Act*, (1877) the word ‘paupers’ had been used.
charge, with permission of a Justice of the Peace, so long as they had ascertained that the person left no funds, or family or friends capable of paying.27

As well as being managed by Boards of Trustees, and being maintained by denominational groups, some cemeteries in the nineteenth century were also appointed sextons, who dug the graves and guarded the cemetery against desecration. In Wellington, the sexton of the Church of England portion of the cemetery was also required to care for Saint Paul's Church. This reflected the continuation of English tradition in the colonial context. While burial-grounds surrounded churches the sexton was the person who had the duties of caring for a church, its vessels, vestments and churchyard, and who often has the duties of parish clerk and gravedigger as well.28 The term ‘sexton’ had no ecclesiastical connotations when used to describe the caretaker of a public non-denominational cemetery. Occasionally sextons were provided with their own residence within the cemetery.

Death was, of course, the fundamental reason for the existence of the cemetery, although it shaped the landscape of the cemetery in more subtle ways. New Zealand’s climate was considered to be conducive to health.29 An American visitor to New Zealand in 1871 remarked:

The capital of Nelson is the city of that name, - by far the prettiest town in the colony. The climate is lovely; no other part of the colonies can compare with it; and it is so healthy that a person wishing to die must remove to some other part of the country or commit suicide.30

In spite of the glowing praise of New Zealand’s salubrious climate, disease still took its toll, particularly among the young, and the urban. The mortality rate for infants and children was severe in Victorian New Zealand. When Lady Barker’s ten-week-old son died in May 1866 she wrote, “Our loss is one too common out here, I am told: Infants born in Christchurch during the Autumn very often die.”31 Her son was the forty-second child under two to have been buried in the Church of England cemetery.

27 The Cemeteries Act, (1882), 525.
28 Alington, Unquiet Earth, 227.
30 "Life in the Cannibal Islands," in Scribner's Monthly, 1, no.6 (April 1871), 590.
so far that year out of 70 burials.\(^{32}\) In Christchurch’s Wesleyan Cemetery, in Barbadoes Street, 62 of the 88 interments which took place in 1874 were those of children.\(^{33}\) Nor were such high figures restricted to swampy Christchurch. In the August of 1873 the Rev. Vicesimus, an Anglican Minister in Thames, wrote in his journal, “One of the most fatal weeks to very young children – not a day has passed without death. Out of the last 27 burials I have had, 21 have been infants”.\(^{34}\) Cemeteries reflect the toll disease took upon children, who were especially vulnerable to diseases such as diphtheria, whooping cough, typhoid fever, scarlet fever and other illnesses which would often claim several members of one family.\(^{35}\) As Belich observes, “A stroll though any old cemetery reveals the interest death took in young children in the nineteenth century.”\(^{36}\) Infant mortality was particularly high among Maori, for whom infant deaths did not fall under 100 per 1000 live births until the late 1880s.\(^{37}\) Such death rates encouraged the use of large memorials, on which to record the lives of all children who died, and the use of family plots. Young children tended not to be buried alone, whether for reasons of expense or sentiment.

The deaths of adults are also recorded in the monuments and memorials of the cemetery landscape. Aotearoa had been relatively disease-free prior to 1769. Contact with the European world changed this forever. The Pakeha explorers, visitors and settlers of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century brought infectious new diseases to New Zealand. These included syphilis, gonorrhoea, tuberculosis (consumption), measles, rubella, mumps, smallpox, cowpox, chickenpox, influenza and whooping cough.\(^{38}\) Typhus and typhoid, scarlet fever and diphtheria were others. The rudimentary plumbing and water supplies of colonial housing and towns increased the effect of these diseases. Both Maori and Pakeha families also tended to live in very small houses, facilitating the spread of disease. Death through various accidents was

\(^{32}\) Lamb, 71.
\(^{33}\) Ibid., 72.
\(^{35}\) Then there are pathetic cases, such as that of little John Hugh Sinclair, who during a remiss moment on the part of his nurse, ate Lucifer matches and died in October 1881, aged 19 months. Wainuiomata Historical Society, *Sinclair Family Cemetery* (Petone: Wainuiomata Historical Society 1984), 11.
\(^{36}\) Belich, 397.
\(^{37}\) Graham, 126.
\(^{38}\) Gluckman, 21.
also common.\textsuperscript{39} Forty drownings occurred in the West Coast alone, between 1865-1870, earning it the name of the ‘West Coast Disease’.\textsuperscript{40} Drowning was, in fact, so frequent a cause of death that it was termed the ‘national’ or ‘New Zealand death’.\textsuperscript{41} Our cemeteries record many deaths through drowning. Accidents, such as fires, mining disasters and shipwrecks are also recorded in New Zealand’s nineteenth century cemeteries and burial grounds. The social and cultural upheavals caused by the conflicts of the 1860s are reflected in the gravestones of those Pakeha and Maori who died. Such monuments are reminders of New Zealand’s sometimes turbulent past.

As I mentioned earlier, when confronted by the ultimate trial of death in a family or community, the immigrants of the nineteenth century fell back upon comforting and familiar religious and cultural practices. For Christians, Jews and the Chinese, one of the most important of these rituals was the funeral. The funeral was (and is) a cathartic ritual which allowed for the grieving to express their sorrow in a familiar fashion, calling on the support of religion and the community. The cemetery was an integral component of the funeral, which was often a much more complex ritual than it is today, in the age of cremation. The funeral also allowed expression of ethnic, political and religious affiliation, just as the cemetery did. For instance, if one belonged to a friendly society, then members might also form part of the funeral procession.

In nineteenth century New Zealand, death and its associated rituals were unashamedly public phenomena.\textsuperscript{42} The funeral was a very visible and significant

\textsuperscript{39} Despite the high rate of accidents, however, the majority of deaths in the period 1850-1910 occurred in the home. In 1880 just under ten per cent of deaths registered in Wellington occurred in hospital. (By 1910 this had risen to almost one third). This was because hospitals had little to offer which the home did not. Those who sought admittance were usually only those who, through social isolation, could not expect to receive appropriate attention in a domestic setting. Cleaver, 2. For instance, Miriam Frankland recorded the illness and death of her young daughter Ava in 1886. Cleaver writes, “The option of admitting the feverish child to nearby Wellington Hospital was never considered by Miriam Frankland, who tended to her child’s needs herself. Although the child received calls from two doctors, the only treatment that they advised [was] a poultice and towards the end, ‘sponging the body with tepid water every two hours’.” Cleaver, 3.

\textsuperscript{40} Read, 7.

\textsuperscript{41} Gordon Ell, \textit{Great Journeys in Old New Zealand} (Auckland: The Bush Press, 1995), 159.

\textsuperscript{42} For those who could afford it, nineteenth century funerals, like contemporary graves, were materially elaborate. Cleaver, 7. The Records of Cole and Springer, undertakers in nineteenth century Dunedin record the following: The funeral of infant Annie Whaley, aged 6 hours cost only £1/15/-.. The funeral of Janet Farra cost £24/15/6 in 1897. Some people arranged their own conveyance for the deceased,
Figure 26. The McCaw family in mourning for their father, William McCaw, at Bells Neuk, Otago, 1902.

Family Albums, Mary Stewart.
Figure 27. Patrick Lysaght recorded this Irish Catholic funeral procession at Hokitika on the 8 March, 1868. Many people from the community, although not directly involved, have turned out to watch.

Reference Number: NON-ATL-0077
social ritual, and an important community event. It was important for people to be there. For the McCaw family in Otago, the death of their elderly father in 1902 was an occasion which called for the reunion of his ten children (Figure 26). The cemetery was an important component of the nineteenth century funeral. One of the most distinctive aspects of the nineteenth century funeral, to modern eyes, was the long and solemn procession of mourners which attended the coffin to the cemetery (Figure 27). Funerals usually began at the residence of the deceased, from where the cortège left for the place of burial. A burial service was conducted by a minister of the religion of the deceased, often associated with the family. In 1964 Amelia Howe recalled the funeral of her young brother at the turn of the century:

Before the priest and mourners arrived, the very young children were taken to spend the day at a friend’s place on the other side of town. We all crowded into the front room for a brief service. After the service, Dad and three of Mum’s brothers carried the coffin out to the waiting hearse. No vehicles were provided for the mourners. We walked slowly behind the coffin. It was a long way to the cemetery (Tararu). We were forced to walk with slow regular steps. The graveside service was short. We were a handful of people, surrounded by tombstones. Someone handed her (Mum) the spade so that she could drop some earth into the grave. The spade was handed to each of us in turn and after we had finished the funeral was over.

The cemetery sometimes possessed a mortuary chapel in which services could be held, sheltered from the weather, prior to burial. In this way, the nineteenth century funeral shaped the material culture of the cemetery.

The ritual of the funeral also influenced the siting of the cemetery. With the practice of walking to the cemetery in a funeral procession, cemeteries needed to be

while others hired a hearse. Mr John Gillies was charged £2/-/- “to loan of Hearse with Plumes and Horses” in August 1897. These entries demonstrate that funeral costs varied greatly, depending on age of deceased, income, what trappings were used. “Records of Cole and Springer, Undertakers, Dunedin, 1896-1902, Some Particulars of the Ledger Book”, 41. Hocken Library, University of Otago.

Funerals in the nineteenth century provide ample evidence of the community cohesion which Miles Fairburn suggests was lacking in colonial New Zealand. It is in ways such as this that the study of death and its rituals in New Zealand can enrich understandings of New Zealand’s history.

This is not so much the case now, with the practice of cremation often eliminating the cemetery from the funeral.

Arbury, n.p. Arbury notes cemetery records indicate that many interments took place one day after death, because of the lack of embalming and the numerous cases of infectious disease.

Quoted from Amelia Howe, “Stamper Battery”, 1964, in Arbury.
located within walking distance of the settlement.\textsuperscript{47} They were often established away from town centres, but close enough for the funeral cortege to walk there. This distance could still prove inconvenient in the days of limited transport and bad roads. During a particularly fatal week in 1873 the Rev. V. Lush noted "[I] everyday have to walk to the cemetery, no slight walk, taking up a deal of my time."\textsuperscript{48} Access to the cemetery was a very important issue. In Otago, William McCaw urged for the formation of a road leading up to the Glenore Cemetery, to improve access to the burial ground. Just as the funeral was a significant community event, the cemetery was an integral component of the community.

With the development of the rail system in the later part of the nineteenth century, the need to site large new cemeteries within walking distance of population concentrations decreased in some areas. This was a boon to Victorian New Zealanders, who had begun to regard their early burial grounds and cemeteries which had been established in close proximity to urban areas as thoroughly unwholesome. In 1886 the Auckland City Council established the cemetery at Waikumete, to replace the crowded Symonds Street Cemetery. Sited on the railway, the cemetery is the second largest in the Southern Hemisphere. The idea was probably inspired by developments in Britain and Australia, where the first mortuary station was constructed in Sydney in 1868.\textsuperscript{49} A train conveyed both the deceased and the mourners the eleven miles from Auckland. A box car with a white cross on the door carried the coffin, and denoted that the car was part of a funeral train, while the funeral party travelled in ordinary carriages on the same train.\textsuperscript{50} A special siding and platform was built at Waikomiti Station, and tearooms were established across the road from the station for the refreshment of the mourners. A regular Sunday train was provided for visitors.\textsuperscript{51} The practice of establishing such remote cemeteries was, however, limited in New Zealand to perhaps this one example. One reason was undoubtedly the expense of the journey, and each subsequent visit to the grave.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{47} The proximity of early cemeteries and burial grounds to settlements means that many have been surrounded or subsumed by the urban growth of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, although they were formerly on the periphery.
\textsuperscript{48} Lush, 138.
\textsuperscript{49} Griffin and Tobin, 68.
\textsuperscript{51} Bridges, 3.
\textsuperscript{52} In the 1900s the fare was 2s 9d return.
There were other reasons for siting the cemetery in Waikumete. The *Weekly News* expressed hopes that with the establishment of the railway and the cemetery in the area a thriving township would develop. An 1886 article argued that “the rites, ceremonies and requirements of the cemetery will be sure to attract fresh residents to the township and so around the city of the dead will arise a new city of the living.”

That this outcome should be desired may seem, at first glance, to make little sense. The ostensible purpose of removing the cemetery to the countryside was to remove burials from the scene of human habitation. It is important here to remember just how different a burial ground established in the 1840s in New Zealand could be from a large, modern and well-planned cemetery of the 1880s. The former was dilapidated, overcrowded, and an undesirable feature of the urban landscape. The latter was an attractive and ornamental asset. The new cemeteries of the larger British cities were neighbourhood attractions, around which fashionable areas developed. In June of 1886 ‘Thorndon’ wrote to the editor of the *New Zealand Times* that in Edinburgh:

> Three new cemeteries have been opened in the past twenty-five years, and each in its turn has become a fashionable quarter. No sooner than the cemetery was laid out than rows of fine houses were erected in the neighbourhood."

The larger cemeteries created in nineteenth century New Zealand were also intended to be more than mere burial places.

In some cases, the colonial funeral, like the colonial cemetery, took on a distinctly New Zealand flavour. This was very evident in the burial of Archdeacon Samuel Williams in 1907. The memorial booklet published after his interment described the funeral and burial ground:

> Perched on the summit of a small hill, and surrounded by a fine sweep of rolling country, stands the pretty, though lonely, little graveyard of Pukehou, where the mortal remains of the Ven. Archdeacon Williams were laid to rest on Saturday. The dominant note in the obsequies of the aged priest was dignified simplicity. The stately hearse, the nodding plumes, the sombre drapings and many other pompous accompaniments of death were absent from the ceremonial, typified, as it was, by the simple carriage which, at the head of a melancholy procession, bore the body on its final journey."

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53 Quoted in O'Leary, *Gone West*, n.p.
54 Cutting from the *New Zealand Times*, June 1886, in Scrap Book 1867-1888, Mantell Family Papers (MS-1545) Alexander Turnbull Library. This demonstrates, once again, that New Zealand's cemeteries were very often colonial versions of Britain's.
55 *In Memoriam: Samuel Williams 1822-1907*, Gisborne, 1907, 23.
The coffin of the founder of Te Aute College was covered by Maori feather mats and wreaths, while the Maori mourners, including the college boys, wore or carried wreaths of willow. An observer noted that “everywhere could be seen the native colour inalienably woven into the texture of the proceedings.”\(^56\) The Church of England service was performed in both English and Maori, and various Maori and English hymns were sung at the grave-side.

Maori involvement in this funeral illustrated not only the affection and esteem which many had for Williams, but also the great importance of mourning, and of the funeral or tangihanga in Maori society. The burial ground likewise remained an integral part of the tangihanga and the Maori landscape, just as it always had. Despite the reformulation of some aspects of the tangihanga in terms of Christianity, the Maori tangi still differed greatly from the Pakeha funeral. One the most notable ways was in the amount of noise. Although the Pakeha funeral may have involved the singing of hymns, it was characterised by stoicism and silent self-control. Elsdon Best noted in 1905 that Maori had “a poor opinion of the silent grief of the white man, and express doubts as to its genuineness.”\(^57\) Maori funerals were characterised by vocal expression of grief. In 1871 Charles Money, making his way toward a pa, observed the “the long, low, wailing notes of the ‘tangi,’ rising and falling like the vibrations of an Æolian harp.”\(^58\) Like urupa, the tangi came to incorporate aspects of Pakeha material culture adapted to specifically Maori uses. During the period before burial, the body was displayed for several days. Best observed that in modern times (1905) a calico tent was often used to cover the corpse, instead of the traditional cloak.\(^59\)

The cemetery was more than a place of burial. It was also a place to visit, whether to attend to the grave of a loved one, or simply to indulge in melancholy recreation and reflection.\(^60\) This role influenced the design and content of the New Zealand’s nineteenth century cemeteries, particularly those serving larger urban areas.

\(^{56}\) Ibid., 24.
\(^{57}\) Best, 21.
\(^{58}\) Charles Money, *Knocking About in New Zealand*, 1871, 58.
\(^{59}\) Best, 19.
\(^{60}\) This reflected the British and French origins of the cemetery in New Zealand, and followed international fashions, such as those in America, where the cemetery developed into a place where the fashionable could visit.
Trees, winding paths and drives, handsome monuments and excellent views became major considerations as the colony matured and had the time and money to spend on the adornment of its necropli. An article in a Wellington paper in 1888 entitled "God's Acre" called for the establishment of a large modern cemetery, claiming that "modern ideas of burying places contemplate something very different from the gloomy graveyards of our forefathers. Room should be provided for extensive plantation, and broad walks of drives, and parterres of shrubs and flowers." The Wellington Cemetery Committee of the Corporation Chairman H. F. Logan argued of a new cemetery in 1878, that "if in laying out and planting, proper taste is shown, it will become a beautiful and picturesque object as viewed from our harbour and city." Another Wellingtonian urged the establishment of a new cemetery in 1887, arguing that:

The question whether the setting apart of a portion of the Town Belt as a cemetery would destroy that portion of the public estate is answered for by the fact that the public cemeteries of Paris, London, Melbourne, and even those of Dunedin and Christchurch, are places of public and popular resort. Thousands of people visit these cemeteries. They are points of public attraction.

Christchurch had put some amount of effort into making its cemeteries conform to the picturesque ideal required of a nineteenth century cemetery. The *Lyttelton Times* commented on the Barbadoes Street Cemetery in 1884:

There has been a considerable amount of clearing done recently among the trees and shrubs of the older portion of the Church of England cemetery with the result that more light and air are admitted to the ground. In the newer portion there have been some very handsome monuments erected lately, and as the whole of the cemetery is extremely well kept, a walk through it during this time of spring flowers is not without a sober pleasure to those who have followed the remains of old friends to so picturesque a last resting place.

As the nineteenth century progressed the New Zealand cemetery came to resemble more its attractive British counterparts. It was place to ease the suffering of the bereaved and was, therefore, a place for the living as much as the dead.

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61 Scrap Book 1867-1888, Mantell Family Papers (MS-1545) Alexander Turnbull Library.
62 Newspaper cutting from 11 July 1878, ibid.
63 Scrap Book 1867-1888, Mantell Family Papers.
64 *Lyttelton Times*, 2 September 1884, quoted in Lamb, 71.
Figure 28. An unidentified cemetery, probably in the Stratford region, c.1900. Although the headstones appear relatively new, the cemetery is neglected and unkempt. The settlers were probably more preoccupied with clearing the land.

James McAllister Collection. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. Reference Number: G-8107-1/1 -.
Not everyone who used the cemetery for recreation was indulging in melancholy reflection, or enjoying the picturesque view. Alfred Sharpe, writing under his pseudonym “Armodeus” in the New Zealand Herald in 1882 observed that:

there were lots of spooning couples, sitting in shady nooks, among, or on the graves; all doing and saying whatever the spirit moved them to do or say, with that utter obliviousness to the presence of spectators which is so characteristic of lower class spoons. O wasn’t some of it scrumptious to the onlookers; yet Armodeus wickedly yearned to throw a bucket of muddy water over each couple, to quench that beautiful enthusiasm that leads them to exhibit their amatory feelings in public, regardless of time, day, or place.65

For others, the cemetery was the focus of a more reverent kind of attention. Patrick O’Farrell has observed that holy places were at the centre of the large body of traditional custom and belief in Ireland, although he suggests that this was discontinued when immigrants relocated to Australia.66 Cathy O’Shea-Miles argues that the people of Hamilton’s Irishtown adopted the cemetery as a substitute ‘holy place’.67 The cemetery, therefore, became a place of visitation, a place where religious and ethnic identity was fostered and expressed.

Although ostensibly places of great spiritual value, the cemeteries and burial grounds, and churchyards established in the nineteenth century were not always as highly regarded or as well maintained as those in Christchurch. This has shaped the landscape of historic cemeteries in two ways: by both creating and depleting physical elements of those landscapes. Historic photographs and written accounts show that cemeteries in the nineteenth century were often neglected (Figure 28.). One cause of the neglected appearance of cemeteries at this time was their use as grazing grounds. Although the use of animals to keep grass down was generally accepted as a means of maintaining early or rural cemeteries, not everyone approved, and the system was liable to abuse. The Taranaki Herald commented in 1860 on:

the fact that the working bullocks furnished by the contractors for the use of H. M. Commissariat are kept in St. Mary’s churchyard. The ground is covered with newly made graves which are barely earthed over before these mounds, which mark the resting place of those buried, are trampled upon and effaced by a herd of hungry cattle. It is

65 LA4 Landscape Architects and Planners, 66.
66 O’Shea-Miles, 146.
67 Ibid.
Figure 29. This watercolour by George Sinclair shows the neglected state of the disused York Place Cemetery in Dunedin, November 1880.

Figure 30. The old York Place Cemetery soon after its transformation into a park, c.1881-4, showing the obelisk erected to the memory of those buried there, most of whom were re-interred in the Southern Cemetery. The tree remained (at right).

Otago Settlers Association Museum, Dunedin.
Figure 31. This notice reflects the continuing tapu nature of Maori burial grounds through the nineteenth century, and the respect with which they were treated.

New Zealand Pacific Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.
Reference Number: EMI 0558 NIW67.
such a misuse of the ground, and such an outrage to our best feelings... 68

Use as a grazing ground meant that structures such as individual grave enclosures were necessary. The use and maintenance of the cemetery in the nineteenth century, therefore, has resulted in the landscapes we see today. Conversely, the use of grazing stock, in combination with outright vandalism, also meant that the material culture of some burial grounds was destroyed. In 1870 the *Otago Witness* described the Old Cemetery in York Place (Figure 29.) as:

> a favourite pasture ground with cows, which have eaten down the grass, destroyed railings, knocked down headstones and trampled on graves. But there are other offenders beside these, for wooden fences have disappeared. 69

The inference was that they had been stolen for firewood. Alington notes that in the Wellington’s Bolton Street Cemetery, despite “notices threatening prosecution for damage, it was not unknown for the cemetery’s wooden paling fences to provide a source of fuel for the stoves of the neighbourhood.” 70 This treatment in the nineteenth century has meant that in the twenty-first, there is sometimes not so much for us left to see. Dunedin’s York Place Cemetery, for example, was completely stripped of stones and grave surrounds in 1880 because of the dilapidated state of the area (Figure 30.). It was grassed over and is now a park. Few people take time to read the monument erected in the memory of those buried there, and most pass through the park unaware that it is a burial ground.

The Pakeha treatment of their own burial places in the nineteenth century contrasts with the veneration with which Maori regarded their urupa. In spite of the changes in Maori burial practice which occurred in the nineteenth century, urupa and wahi tapu continued to be highly revered as significant and tapu places. Danny Keenan notes that during the nineteenth century “reverence for wahi tapu, burial and other historic sites was maintained.” 71 **Figure 31.** is a reproduction of a notice which warns, both in Maori and English, that the site is a burial ground, and trespass is

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69 *Otago Witness*, 5 February 1870, 14.
70 Alington, *Unquiet Earth*, 70.
71 Keenan, 254.
forbidden because of its tapu and sacred nature. The respect evinced by this notice is in strong contrast to the occasionally irreverent way in which Pakeha regarded and treated their cemeteries, by grazing animals, surreptitiously dumping rubbish and stealing the fence palings for firewood.

Despite often being located at the spiritual and physical heart of the community, the cemetery in nineteenth century New Zealand was sometimes regarded as a sinkhole of contamination and disease, a source of miasmatic effluvia. This influenced the siting and planting of many of the cemeteries we see today. The idea of the cemetery as polluting was based on contemporary medical thought in Britain and America, where the old urban churchyards had been closed because of the threat it was believed they posed to public health. Zymotic, or airborne contagious diseases, such as cholera, were thought to be caused by the release of decomposing substances into the air through the formation of miasma. Wellington’s cemetery was described as a “potent factor in the dissemination of zymotic diseases” and the main cause behind Wellington’s increasing death rate. 72 One contemporary newspaper reporter referred to the creek in the cemetery as “this little stream of abomination ... carrying with it foul miasmata”. 73

That New Zealand’s early cemeteries and burial grounds had been established too close to settlements was realised by the early 1850s. In 1852 the New Zealander said in relation to the Symonds Street cemeteries in Auckland, that it would have been better “had these cemeteries been placed at a greater distance from the town” because of the threat of water pollution from “morbific matter”. 74 In 1855 a Select Committee of the Provincial Council was convinced that if burial continued in Wellington’s Bolton Street Cemetery, located in town, there would be fatal consequences. The 1850s were also the years in which the Burial Acts of Great Britain and Ireland prohibited burial in the old overcrowded churchyards, and required the establishment of modern cemeteries on the outskirts of a town. 75 Although the cemetery in Bolton Street was the first modern cemetery in New Zealand, it had been placed without

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72 Alington, Unquiet Earth, 83.
73 Quoted in Alington, Unquiet Earth, 82.
74 New Zealander, 28 February 1852, 3, quoted in LA4 Landscape Architects and Planners, 17.
75 Alington, Unquiet Earth, 75.
consideration for the future growth of the settlement. The Superintendent of the Province of Wellington argued in the early 1870s that:

Whatever might have been the consideration which originally directed the choice of the site, there can be no doubt that to continue much longer the use, for purposes of interment, of a piece of ground sloping towards the centre of a town whose population is steadily increasing, will be highly injurious to the health of the inhabitants.\(^{76}\)

Dr. Nedwill in his report on the Barbadoes Street cemeteries wrote: “It is universally recognised that the air of grave-yards is prejudicial to health, and that it is not advisable on sanitary grounds that cemeteries should be situated in towns.”\(^{77}\) As New Zealand matured, therefore, new cemeteries were usually established at a greater distance from urban areas, such as the new cemetery at Waikumete, established eleven miles from Auckland in 1886.\(^{78}\) In both new and existing cemeteries trees and smaller plants were important not only in creating a picturesque setting of mortality, but in reducing the evil effects of decomposition. For, according to the advice of Dr. Nedwill, “the planting of trees and shrubs of rapid growth should be encouraged, with the double object of absorbing dampness from the soil and noxious exhalations.”\(^{79}\)

Not everyone believed the cemetery to be dangerous to health. The sexton of the Church of England portion of the Bolton Street Cemetery, Thomas Carr, testified:

As regards offensive odours arising from the graves, I am in the cemetery at all times, day and evening, and I must confess that I have not experienced any, and as to the unhealthiness of the place, I have four children, and they are constantly playing in the cemetery, and I may say there is another family of children constantly in there, yet not one of either family has been sick from any ill effects that might possibly be attributed to the place where they play.\(^{80}\)

In Auckland, Dr. Philson believed, against popular medical theory, that “the supposition of poisoning the atmosphere by noxious gases was carried too far.”\(^{81}\)

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\(^{76}\) Quoted in Alington, *Unquiet Earth*, 76.

\(^{77}\) Lamb, 71.

\(^{78}\) Living in proximity to the cemetery could be, if not dangerous, plain unpleasant. One exasperated Wellington resident wrote in the early 1880s: “Ever since 1873 this question [of closing the Bolton Street Cemetery] has been before Parliament, and though the population has nearly doubled since then, nothing has been done to stop the practice of burying the dead in the heart of the city. It is not a pleasant thing to witness funerals from your windows day by day, much less to hear when at meals, ‘I am the resurrection, etc.’ and the sextons shovel rattling earth and stones on the coffin of the departed.” Quoted in Alington, *Unquiet Earth*, 83.

\(^{79}\) Lamb, 71.

\(^{80}\) Quoted in Alington, *Unquiet Earth*, 84.

\(^{81}\) Gluckman, 29.
Others complained that New Zealand was emulating developments in Britain for the mere sake of it. In June 1886 ‘Thorndon’ wrote to the editor of the New Zealand Times:

We are rather too fond of aping the Home Country in all things, without either rhyme or reason, very often. The old cities of Great Britain have closed their old churchyards, it is true, but not until hundreds of years of use, and when you could not put your foot down without treading on a grave. It will be a very long time before we arrive at such a state of affairs in this young country. So there is no good reason for following the Home fashion in this matter so fast. And the cities of the Old Country have not opened their cemeteries from any fear, but simply because the old burial grounds were so full that is was impossible to put more bodies in them.  

But whether from emulation of the new practices of Britain, or from notions of the spread of disease, these quotations reveal that both contemporary medical notions, and international developments contributed to the shaping of the landscapes of our nineteenth century cemeteries.

The availability of materials suited to memorialisation was a further factor which influenced the appearance of our cemeteries. In the early decades of European settlement immigrants often had to make do, substituting stone headstones with those of wood, and iron railings with wooden palings. The appearance of these earliest burial grounds often differed greatly to the later cemeteries. By the 1850s and 1860s slate headstones from England, sandstone from Sydney, and Oamaru stone memorials were available for those who could afford them. Imported stones came as blanks and were inscribed in New Zealand. In particularly isolated areas improvisation was the norm. Not everyone, however, was content with the wooden palings that marked contemporary graves. After her husband Frederick died from dropsy in 1854 Eliza Maundrell wrote to her sister Charlotte from Mount Pleasant, Lyttelton, wishing her “and Robert to see about getting a handsome tombstone and iron railings for his grave as I cannot get them here”.  

In more settled and industrialised regions people had greater access to the modern material trappings of death. In Dunedin skilfully carved monuments in Oamaru stone were available from the 1860s. Living in a

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82 Scrap Book 1867-1888, Mantell Family Papers
Figure 32. This photograph of Mansfield’s stone mason yard in Christchurch, c.1900, reveals the great variety of monuments available by the end of the nineteenth century to those New Zealanders who could afford them. 

comparatively highly industrialised area, Dunedinites were also able to choose
from a wide range of decorative cast iron grave surrounds, while their northern
counterparts relied heavily on wood. This also contributed, in some part, to the
regional character of cemeteries discussed in the previous chapter. However, the
relative isolation which created this was short-lived.

As the nineteenth century drew on, the variety, quantity and quality of
available headstones and monuments in the country increased. Monumental masons
established themselves in urban areas, with their yards crowded with a wide selection
of memorials (Figure 32.). Thomas Miller established himself as a sculptor and
mason in Wellington’s Custom House Quay in 1876. By the 1890s he was supplying
“monuments of every variety” made from ordinary stone slabs quarried in New
Zealand, as well as imported marble from Italy and granite from Aberdeen. Masons
also supplied railings and kerbs. There was no ‘death industry’ in nineteenth century
New Zealand, and many masons supplied stones as a sideline to their other
businesses. W. Miller and Sons could not only supply headstones and railings in the
choicest of designs, but could provide one with drain pipes and chimney pots as well.
By the end of the nineteenth century, New Zealanders had access to all the burial
trimmings they could wish for. Mrs Tilburn, of the Provincial Hotel in Stafford
Street, Dunedin, made the most of this and her wealth in 1902, being billed by
undertakers Cole and Springer for the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To erecting concrete wall around double section (in the Northern Cemetery)</td>
<td>£30/13/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>also foundation for Monument, lay concrete on surface of section and spread</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with marble chips. Erect tomb railing with gate etc – painted and finished</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in Bronze. Erect monument of marble as per design, with inscription and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verses as instructed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete and cementing...</td>
<td>£19/10/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marble Chips.</td>
<td>£2/10/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronzing.</td>
<td>£1/-/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monument.</td>
<td>£55/-/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 lead letters @8d.</td>
<td>£10/-/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£118/-/-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clearly Mrs Tilburn was a woman with some pretensions to grandeur. Not everyone
could afford such a grand burial place, and others chose, or were forced, to exercise

84 Cyclopaedia of New Zealand, 1 (Wellington: Cyclopaedia Co., 1897), 603.
greater frugality. Cole and Springer also record that one man bought his grave railings second hand for £1/10/-.

The design and layout of the burial grounds, cemeteries and churchyards established in the nineteenth century varied from the strictly utilitarian to the ornamental and picturesque. Influences came largely from Britain, often in quite a direct fashion. In the 1850s the new settlement of Collingwood, in Nelson, was provided with a cemetery plan drawn up in England. It allotted a generous fifteen acres on what was imagined to be a picturesque site overlooking the town, but instead proved boulder-strewn and rough. In other cases the site was chosen first, according to what was considered desirable in the modern cemeteries of Britain. In 1857 The Otago Witness was of the opinion that the Dunedin Town Board’s proposed site for a new cemetery in the North East Valley was:

about the best adapted for a Cemetery which could be selected; it is in a remarkably picturesque spot, and if attended to, as it should be, may at no great expense be made to rival any of the best selected Cemeteries in the old country.

The influence of the Old World sometimes came via the new. In 1875 the trustees of the public cemetery in Bolton Street paid one guinea for the plans and rules of the Melbourne Cemetery. A few years later Benjamin Smith was asked to prepare a form of instructions for graves “on the model of that in use at Melbourne”. Melbourne’s cemetery had been designed by Albert Purchas, who combined elements of the picturesque or romantic cemetery design of the nineteenth century as embodied by Kensal Green in London, and Paris’s Pere Lachaise, with the more formal design popularised by Loudon in Britain. In the first two models park-like plantings were used, while Loudon’s plans promoted the use of trees and shrubs traditionally associated with death. Both winding and straight paths were used, as well as combinations of deciduous and evergreen trees. With the importation of these ideas and plans, nineteenth century New Zealanders stayed up to date with popular

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86 Ibid., 97. I am not quite sure how one came by second-hand grave railings. Perhaps they were cast off pieces of decorative iron from a factory or garden?
89 Quoted in Alington, Unquiet Earth, 67.
90 Sagazio, 50.
international attitudes towards death and burial, drawing heavily on the developments in cemetery design which were taking place in the Western world.

Cremation is the last influence I wish to examine. Cremation had a profound effect on the architectural expression of death and the landscape of the cemetery during the twentieth century, occasioning both the construction of crematorium, and the decline of the grave and headstone. In New Zealand prior to World War One, this effect was barely beginning to be noticed. In Britain cremation had slowly gained acceptance from 1885 when the first crematorium was opened at Woking, in Surrey. Closer to home, *The Burial-Ground Closing Act*, (1874), made it lawful for any person to be cremated according to the wishes of their will, provided that the burning did not create any private or public nuisance.91 *The Cemeteries Act*, (1882), continued this.92 *The Cemeteries Act, 1882 Amendment (Cremation) Act*, (1895) further allowed that the “Trustees of any cemetery may make provision for cremation, and may erect a crematorium, whether within the limits of the cemetery under their control, or not.”93 Although never illegal in New Zealand, the idea of cremation failed to gain popular following until agitation in the early twentieth century. At a meeting in the Dunedin Town Hall in 1900 a letter written in lieu of attendance by the well-known Rev. Dr. Waddell argued:

I certainly think that the time has come when the alternative of burning or burying should be made possible for the city. Religion, as far as I can see, puts no bar in the way of cremation. It is a sanitary question, to be settled on sanitary grounds, and, in my opinion, it is settled in favour of cremation.94

Three years later the Dunedin Cremation Society published its defence of cremation, *Cremation Versus Earth Burial*. This primarily urged the adoption of cremation based on hygienic arguments. Cremation, the society argued, would remove the mass of putrefactive bodies which caused zymotic diseases such as measles, scarlet fever, diphtheria, and typhoid.95 Public acceptance of cremation finally resulted in the construction of New Zealand’s first crematorium in 1909 at Wellington’s Karori

91 *The Burial-Ground Closing Act*, (1874), *New Zealand Statutes*, Wellington, 1874, 245.
92 *The Cemeteries Act*, (1882), 534.
95 *Cremation Versus Earth Burial*, 17.
Cemetery. Famous for its stained glass windows, the crematorium is the first indication of the impact that cremation would have on the landscape of New Zealand’s cemeteries. As such it signals a turning point between the cemeteries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In New Zealand the triumph of the cemetery came to an end in the early years of the twentieth century. Several factors contributed to this. The impact of egalitarian ideology at the end of the nineteenth century, which disapproved of material expressions of status was one of these. This colonial movement combined with the international trends toward simplicity in grave monuments, which was initiated in 1917 with the establishment of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, to bring about a newer, simpler style of commemoration in New Zealand. These trends were supported by a decline in the values we call ‘Victorian’, such as conspicuous consumption, particularly in the field of death. Fashion was also responsible, and a growing simplicity can be observed in contemporary architecture and costume. Finally, the rise of cremation reduced the degree to which death was the subject of architectural expression. Without a body, there is no need for a grave. All these factors combined to bring about a new, simpler style of memorialisation, which gained full expression in the lawn cemeteries of the mid-twentieth century. The cemeteries of the nineteenth century contrast strongly with those of the early twenty-first century, both in New Zealand and overseas. As Worpole notes, one can:

Take a train out of any town in Britain, and before long you will pass a number of small churchyards and Victorian cemeteries: angelic, sepulchral, the headstones titling any which way, the interiors thick with buddleia and mournfulness. In contrast, the cemeteries of the modern era are bleak, flat fields with serried rows of nondescript gravestones looking like an abandoned game of patience, with all the spiritual uplift of a supermarket car park. 96

New Zealand’s nineteenth and early twentieth century cemeteries and burial grounds were shaped by a variety of factors. In the previous chapter I examined the influence of ethnicity, religion, regionalism, events, and economic ties. This chapter analysed the influence of more tangible factors, including the ways in which

cemeteries were established, the impact of cemetery legislation, death, funerals, the
treatment of the cemetery, its uses, attitudes toward the cemetery, contemporary
medical notions, the availability of the material culture of death, the impact of
international developments, and of cremation. These processes and influences
resulted in the rich material culture of the many nineteenth century cemeteries, urupa,
burial grounds and churchyards we can see today. It is to them we now turn our
attention.
When Odeda Rosenthal spotted a mulberry tree at the entrance of the old Wakapuaka cemetery in Nelson in 1986, she knew that the Jewish tombstones she was looking for would be found on that side of the hill. She was right. The Torah requires the planting of a tree at least once in a lifetime. If it could not be planted in the Holy Land, then the cemetery was an acceptable substitute. The planting of a tree was also a gesture of consolation to grieving families. This demonstrates that the various individuals and groups of people who made this country their home shaped the landscapes of our nineteenth century cemeteries. Their burial customs were transplanted to antipodean soil, often modified in response to available materials, and combined to create the burial grounds, churchyards and cemeteries that today form such valuable and intriguing, yet neglected, components of our cultural and historic landscape. New Zealand’s cemeteries were rarely the Arcadian landscapes of death which were created in America, Britain and Europe in the nineteenth century. Although clearly influenced by these models, the cemetery in New Zealand took on its own distinctive character, shaped by events and the combination of Old World custom and New World necessity, as well as a fusion of introduced and indigenous culture. Time has done much to soften differences between nineteenth century British and New Zealand cemeteries by removing some of the more unique colonial elements, such as the once common wooden grave markers enclosures.

The material culture of the nineteenth century cemetery which remains today is an important part of our built heritage, and an important, yet under-utilised resource. In the cemetery, Richard Meyer argues:

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2 Much of the mortuary architecture produced by Maori in the nineteenth century was also of wood, and the transition from prehistoric practices to those of the early twentieth century is recorded largely in the surviving European drawings and watercolours of the nineteenth century, rather than in surviving memorials.
may be found, conveniently grouped within carefully defined sacred or secular perimeters, an astoundingly revealing array of material artefacts which serve as tangible intermediaries in the ongoing communicative process leading to a richer understanding of the history and cultural values of community, region and, nation. ‘Nowhere else,’ cultural geographer Terry Jordan has maintained, ‘is it possible to look so deeply into our people’s past.’

In material culture studies cemeteries are viewed as “spatially delineated repositories of cultural artefacts.” Although not created for this purpose, one of the many functions historic cemeteries have assumed is the role of outdoor museum.

This chapter examines the rich material culture contained in these ‘outdoor museums’, which resulted from the cultural and historical contexts and influences examined in the previous chapters. I wish to convey both some sense of what these burial places appeared like both in the nineteenth century, and today, through reference to historic and modern photographs. The various types of burial place which were established in nineteenth century New Zealand is analysed first. The location and features of the layout of these burial places is then discussed, including plantings, sectarian divisions, family and individual burial plots. An examination of the individual elements contained within the layout, including headstones and their inscriptions and epitaphs, mausoleums, enclosures, structures such as chapels, sexton’s cottages, and morgues and crematoria, follows. Of course, many historic cemeteries and urupa are still in use today, and their nineteenth and early twentieth century features are sometimes contrasted with the material culture of a later date.

Ranging in size from the 310 acres of Waikumete established in 1886, the second largest cemetery in the Southern Hemisphere, to the lonely unmarked burials in the gold districts of Otago, the burial ground or cemetery was an indispensable component of every New Zealand settlement. Cultural geographer D. Gregory Jeane argues in relation to America that:

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3 Meyer, 2.
4 Ibid.
5 Bridges, 6. It is second to the nineteenth century Rookwood Cemetery in Sydney.
An essential requirement of the new frontier community was to designate space for formal burial of their dead, an act which often preceded construction of a church.⁶

Along with schools, halls, churches, mills and stores, cemeteries were one of a collection of community services established in immigrant settlements. A place to bury one’s dead was also an essential feature of the settlements of New Zealand’s indigenous population.

To an extent, each historic New Zealand cemetery or burial ground is unique. Each differs in when and where it was established, in who was buried there, and through many other subtle factors. They can, however, be grouped into types. There are several different types of historic cemetery found in New Zealand. In Victoria, Australia, cemeteries have been recognised as reflecting nine land settlement patterns/themes: Aborigines, convicts, pastoralists, gold seekers, small farmers, seafarers, famous people, losers and Melburnians.⁷ Celestina Sagazio, in her study of Victoria’s historic cemeteries, divided burial places into ‘The First Cemeteries’, ‘Churchyard Cemeteries’, ‘Central Melbourne’, ‘Suburban Cemeteries’, ‘Provincial Cemeteries’, ‘Ethnic Cemeteries’, ‘Goldfields Cemeteries’, ‘Rural Cemeteries’, ‘Aboriginal Mission Cemeteries’ and ‘Private Cemeteries and Lone Graves’. Sagazio’s terms, with some modification, provide a useful model for the New Zealand experience. I have created ten categories or types based on the history of New Zealand and cemeteries in Chapters Two, Three and Four.⁸ These are Maori urupa, early European burial grounds, mission burial grounds, churchyards, urban/municipal, rural, goldfield, New Zealand Wars, and family cemeteries, and lone or individual graves. Of course, these terms overlap in many cases. Churchyards and urupa, for instance, are often rural. Nor do they include every ‘type’ of cemetery, such as cemeteries on quarantine islands.

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⁷ Sagazio, 2. In the National Estate-funded study “Cemeteries of Victoria”.

⁸ Not all cemeteries fit into easily definable categories. For instance, I have not dealt with cemeteries established on quarantine islands in the nineteenth century, such as those on Somes Island in Wellington Harbour, and on Quarantine Island in Otago Harbour, which are significant historic sites that speak of immigration, hope, disease and death.
Figure 33. Te Puni Urupa in Petone. Now surrounded by industrial buildings, this urupa has been used by the Te Puni family for generations. In the centre is the monument erected over the grave of Te Puni shown in Figure 25.

Author's own photograph, 2004.
Figure 34. The church and burial ground at Puketeraki with Karitane in the background, c.1890, by Frances Hodgkins.

Maori urupa are the first type I have identified. Maori have a long history of burial in New Zealand. At the beginning of the nineteenth century urupa were entirely free from European influence. The variety of burial practices, which can be divided into the two categories of primary and secondary burial, meant that types of urupa and wahi tapu varied. Variety was further encouraged by differences in burial practices on an iwi or regional basis. Generally, the bones of high ranking, and therefore tapu, individuals were hidden in secret caves. Lesser ranking persons were buried in urupa near the pa, in dunes or perhaps sunk in tapu springs. In regions where hiding bones from enemies was less of a concern, papa tupapaku were erected to hold the bones or the bodies of rangatira. Memorials in the form of waka placed upright in the ground were also used to mark the graves of high-ranking Maori and later Pakeha Maori. Very few have survived. With missionary activity in New Zealand from 1814, and the widespread conversion to Christianity from 1830 among Maori, some aspects of the tangihanga were reformulated in terms of Christianity. The missionaries also actively repressed customs such as exhumation and secondary burial. Through these and other influences Maori came to appropriate the material culture of death used by Pakeha, such as headstones. These were sometimes interpreted in a uniquely Maori fashion (Figure 14.). Given the great change Maori society and culture in general, and burial practices in particular, underwent in the nineteenth century, it is difficult to identify a universal type of Maori burial ground from this period. Urupa which had been in use for generations continued to be used, and many still are today (Figure 33.). As modern marae began to evolve, urupa were often associated with these. Maori churches also often had their own burial grounds (Figure 34.). Generally, as the nineteenth century drew on urupa came to incorporate the Pakeha material culture of death on a greater scale. Urupa of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century often share the same material features as their Pakeha contemporaries, but possess a distinct flavour imparted by connection with marae or church, and their often scrupulous upkeep which contrasts with the dilapidated condition of many historic Pakeha cemeteries. Other tangible qualities, such as Maori inscriptions and often a lack of plantings, as well as intangible qualities, such as tapu, also characterise nineteenth century urupa.9

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9 There is, perhaps, little relevance in distinguishing ‘historic’ urupa from prehistoric burial places, and urupa in use today. All are important to Maori, and are extremely tapu, and placing them into neatly defined time periods or types has little meaning.
Figure 35. The Old French Cemetery, L’Aube Hill, Akaroa as it appears today after its 1925 transformation from burial ground to pioneer memorial.

Taken from Akaroa Civic Trust, *French Cemetery - L’Aube Hill*  
http://www.historicakaroa.co.nz/buildingdetail.asp?bid=54&street=L%27Aube%20Hill&so=2  
(10 March 2004).

Figure 36. The 1856 mission station church of St Paul, and its accompanying burial ground, today at Harini (Rangiaowhia), the site of a once thriving Maori community.

Taken from John Wilson, *AA Historic Places New Zealand* (Auckland: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990), 54.
Early European burial grounds, dating from 1800 to 1850, are the next type. These first burial places and cemeteries were characterised by improvisation and simplicity. Wood was, of course, the most readily available material, and a slab of wood, or an earthen mound often marked early graves. Both were susceptible to deterioration, and many early individual graves and burial grounds have disappeared. Those that are still marked sometimes contain no original material. The former York Place Cemetery in Dunedin received the body of a labourer working for the surveyors in October 1846.  

Although closed in 1858, family members were buried there until 1865. In 1880, with the burial ground in a revolting state, most of the bodies were disinterred, the stones and wooden surrounds were removed, and an obelisk set in the newly created park was erected to commemorate those buried there (Figure 30). The French Cemetery on L'Aube Hill in Akaroa, fared little better, although it is still known as a cemetery. The oldest consecrated cemetery in the South Island, it was used for burials from 1842 until 1863.  

When the new denominational cemeteries were built in Akaroa in the latter nineteenth century the burial ground became neglected. Most of the most of the wooden crosses disappeared and the area became overgrown with old French roses and huge willows. In 1925 the burial ground was cleared and the present monument erected (Figure 35).  

Relics of the nineteenth century attempts to convert Maori to Christianity and 'civilisation', mission station burial grounds are the third type of nineteenth century burial place I have identified. Many mission burial grounds were established around the mission church, symbolising the central role of religion in the settlement (Figure 36.). Like churchyard burial grounds and many Maori urupa, they are, or were, components of larger complexes or landscapes: the mission stations. Mission stations were important centres for the dissemination of European culture and literature, and

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10 Ockwell. This was two years prior to the formal settlement of Dunedin in 1848. 
12 Ibid. The first burial recorded on the stone is of Edouard Le Lievre, Captain of the Heva, who died in 1842 of 'vegetable colic'. His memorial survived the 1925 renovation, and is now mounted on the side of the plinth. The graves are shaded by weeping willows thought to have grown from a cutting taken from Napoleon's grave at St. Helena, and introduced to New Zealand by Francois Le Lievre who arrived in Akaroa aboard the whaler Nil in 1837. When he returned to Akaroa in 1840 with the main party of French settlers he found the trees well established. Today these trees are important historic features.
Figure 37. The 1840s Anglican Christ Church in Wanganui, photographed in the 1860s.

Reference Number: G- 8471-1/2 - .

Figure 38. View from the harbour of Lambton Quay, Wellington in 1863. The Bolton Street cemetery sits above the infant city, a ‘discrete feature of the landscape’.

Reference Number: F- 19548-1/4 - .
were places where Maori could witness European customs, including burial customs, in practice. Burial grounds were not only necessary adjuncts to any mission station, they also served as models to be replicated by Maori. Being products of missionary activity and the conscious effort to transplant 'civilised' and Christian ideas of burial onto New Zealand’s indigenous population and landscape they are significant components of New Zealand’s historic landscape, for both Maori and Pakeha. They also bear witness to the isolation and hardships endured by missionaries.

Churchyard burial grounds are simple to define, being located around a church. Until the 1850s in Britain, the churchyard was still the commonest place of burial, and was not yet superseded by the modern cemetery. Following the traditional system of burial in Britain, churchyard burial grounds were typically established in early, rural or small settlements in New Zealand (Figure 37). Many feature grid plans and traditional plantings such as yew and holly. One of the earliest European burial grounds in New Zealand, is that which surrounds the 1836 Christ Church in Russell, the oldest church in this country. The predominantly English population of the 1841 Wakefield settlement of New Plymouth was served by Saint Mary’s Church. The still used churchyard of the 1840s Anglican Church of St Johns at Waikouaiti, the oldest church in Otago, is another example. In small rural settlements the Church was the centre of the community, and death was a community event. The burial ground and the church continued to be combined into the 1860s and 1870s in country districts, and many survive today. Churchyard burial grounds reflect the importance of continuing British traditions in colonial New Zealand, and the importance of religion in colonial society.

Most burial places in New Zealand did not owe their existence to ‘ecclesiastical initiative’, and as in Australia, most cemeteries in New Zealand developed independently of churches. As Charlotte Godley noted in Wellington in 1850, “they have begun at once here not burying in the churchyards”. Rather than being an adjunct of a church, New Zealand’s nineteenth century cemeteries were usually discrete features of the landscape (Figure 38). These municipal cemeteries,

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13 Unless, as occasionally happens, the graveyard has survived the church itself.
15 Godley, 51.
Figure 39. Dunedin's Northern Cemetery, c.1874, showing all the essential elements of picturesque design. The drive curves away in the distance, soon to be lined with monuments, headstones and shrubs. A hill-top position gives views over the city, and the picture is completed by the attractive sexton's cottage.

Hocken Library, University of Otago, Dunedin.
Reference Number: c/n E1882/18.
Figure 40. Symonds Street Cemetery, Auckland, 1864. Dominated by picket fences and bare of trees and headstones, it contrasts greatly with its British contemporaries and the New Zealand cemeteries of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Reference Number: G-96098-1/2 - .

Figure 41. A view of Nelson with the cemetery in the foreground, in the 1860s. An imported headstone and a locally-made rail and doweling grave surround are enclosed by a rough railing fence.

Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.
Reference Number: PA1-o-493-10.
Figure 42. Pine trees are the main form of vegetation in this view of the new Nelson Cemetery in the 1890s. As well as substantial white marble monuments and iron enclosures, evergreens were an important part of modern cemetery design in the late nineteenth century.

Reference Number: G-115-10x8.

Figure 43. Christchurch Cemetery, c.1914. The cemeteries at the end of the nineteenth century were very different to those fifty years earlier. The cemetery was not a static feature of the landscape, but constantly changed with new local and international trends and the exploitation of new materials.

Reference Number: G-5545-1/1 - .
which were established in New Zealand during the nineteenth century, are the fifth, and most common, type. The cemetery, as distinct from urupa, churchyard and burial ground, was first introduced in Wellington, in 1840. This enlightened piece of civic planning reflected developments in France and Britain in the first decades of the nineteenth century, and the move from the parish churchyard, to the public cemetery as the main place of burial. These new British cemeteries, after a period of being the preserve of private companies, typically “owed their existence”, argues Colvin, “to secular rather than to ecclesiastical initiative and were under the control of municipalities or boards rather than of the local clergy.”\textsuperscript{16} In New Zealand’s larger centres, municipal cemeteries were established early on, and nineteenth century legislation soon placed the onus on local authorities to provide burial grounds. Many cemeteries were divided into religious denominations, and the officiating clergy came and went with the undertakers. Being modelled on the new municipal cemeteries of Britain and Australia, New Zealand’s public cemeteries not only featured sectarian segregation, but also incorporated elements of fashionable nineteenth century picturesque and formal cemetery design. Plantings, monuments, straight and meandering paths were important features. One of the best examples in New Zealand is Duned in’s Northern Cemetery (Figure 39.). The colonial version of the public cemetery did not usually tend towards the scale and magnificence of the great British cemeteries, or the park like qualities of the great nineteenth century American cemeteries such as Mount Auburn. Many early public cemeteries were often as simple and primitive as the earliest burial grounds (Figures 40. and 41.) As time progressed, however, New Zealand’s cemeteries came to assume a more modish and substantial appearance, as can be seen in Figures 42 and 43.

New Zealand’s rural cemeteries are the sixth type of burial place which can be seen today. Although always a relatively urban society, many New Zealanders lived in countless small rural communities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. With the break-up of the great estates in the 1890s in the South Island, and the confiscation of Maori land and the clearance of the dense bush covering in the North Island from the 1860s, small family farms were established as a normal pattern of settlement. In this category I include the cemeteries of small rural towns, many of which developed to service these farms. There is some overlap between this and the

\textsuperscript{16} Colvin, 368.
above category, as local bodies also established many rural and small town cemeteries. The distinguishing factors are their location and physical characteristics. Rural or small town cemeteries are often set away from the main settlement, though within walking distance, often on a hillside, whereas urban cemeteries are usually part of a contiguous urban landscape. In style, they are usually scaled-down versions of their urban counterparts, with many containing sectarian divisions. Differences include the general lack of picturesque layout and plantings because of their smaller size. Rather than being planned as ornamental additions to the landscape, or as recreational facilities, most display a quiet utilitarianism. There may also be fewer early monuments because of the need to improvise in wood prior to easy access to stone markers. These rural cemeteries often still serve the community for which they were built over 100 years ago.

The nineteenth century cemeteries of the Otago and West Coast goldfields are the only type of cemetery I have based on distinctive region and occupation. With the gold rushes of the 1860s, first in Otago, and then on the West Coast, the populations of these regions swelled with the thousands of miners and entrepreneurs who flooded into New Zealand from all over the world. The settlements which sprang up were, perhaps, the most cosmopolitan New Zealand had, and has, ever seen. Miners from Australia, many who had been in the Californian rush, Scotland, Ireland, England, Wales, China, Germany, Lebanon, and Italy lived, and died, on the goldfields. Some settlements were dominated by a particular ethnicity, such as the Welsh settlement of the Cambrians and the Irish-dominated Saint Bathans in Central Otago. The Chinese also tended to form close communities. The goldfield populations experienced many hardships, and miners often died prematurely from accidents. The cemeteries in these regions record the turbulent years of the 1860s, the diverse range of ethnicities and religions, and the hardships of the goldfields. Occasionally the cemetery has outlasted the settlement itself, as at Hamitlons, in Otago. Although goldfield cemeteries could be classed as rural or urban, they are distinct products of social and economic developments.

The result of the tumultuous decades of interracial conflict primarily restricted to the North Island from the 1840s to the 1870s, 'New Zealand Wars' graves and cemeteries are very significant parts of the historic landscape. They speak of the
Figure 45. This 1851 watercolour by Charles Emilius Gold shows the burial ground created to hold the bodies of the Pakeha victims who died nearby in the 1843 Wairau Affray.

Figure 44. The soldiers of the 58th Regiment who died fighting Maori in the Hutt Valley during 1846 were buried in the simple enclosure in the foreground, near Boulcott’s Stockade.

Reference Number: B-081-002.
Figure 46. Rangiriri, 1864, showing the Maori church (left) and pa (right), later Te Wheoro’s redoubt, near the Waikato River. This was the site of one of the bloodiest battles of the New Zealand Wars.


Figure 47. The Maori church and military cemetery at Rangiriri, 1864. After the Battle of Rangiriri in November 1864 the Maori casualties were buried within the trenches of the pa. They were later exhumed and buried on Taupiri Mountain in the 1890s. The fallen British officers were taken to Auckland for burial, while the men of other ranks were interred in this elaborate cemetery near the Maori church. The military cemetery can still be seen today.

Figure 48. New Plymouth’s Saint Mary’s, c1870, showing the simple crosses (foreground) erected over the graves of soldiers who died in fighting around Taranaki in the 1860s.

Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.
Reference Number: F-137326-1/2 -.
Figure 49. An ornate wooden grave marker from the land wars of the 1860s which has been preserved within a local church.

Taken from Jock Phillips and Chris McLean, The Sorrow and the Pride: New Zealand War Memorials (Wellington: Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1990) 16.
Figure 50. The simple cemetery (left) on the Starborough Estate, looking towards the Awatere across the sections west of the homestead in January 1899.

violence and loss experienced by Maori, British soldiers and their families at home and settler families in New Zealand. Occasionally a cemetery was established at the scene of the conflict, often near a stockade or redoubt (Figures 44, 45, 46 and 47.). In other cases victims were buried in existing cemeteries and churchyards or burial grounds. Two examples are the churchyard of Saint John’s in Te Awamutu, and the churchyard around Saint Mary’s in New Plymouth, (Figure 48.). Both contain the bodies of English soldiers and officers killed in the conflicts of the 1860s. Both churchyards also contain the bodies of Maori casualties. Such graves and cemeteries are excellent examples of the influence of events in shaping cemetery landscapes. Many grave markers were made from wood, and only those that were removed inside churches have survived (Figure 49.). Others were marked with stone. These markers are significant not only as New Zealand’s earliest war memorials: they also reveal the full impact of these conflicts on the Pakeha population, and the religious and racial terms in which they dealt with the trauma.

The ninth type of cemetery is the family cemetery or burying place (Figure 50.). These are relatively rare in New Zealand, where most people had access to the local cemetery. Also, strict regulations prohibited the common use of family burial plots on private family land. The fact that they are on private land makes it difficult to gauge numbers, and it is probable that more exist than is generally realised, particularly in early and remote districts. Occasionally one will see a small picket fenced area containing a few headstones in a paddock near a homestead when driving through the country. In many cases the graves are unmarked, as the isolation which necessitated a private burial ground meant that a headstone was not easily procurable, and wooden substitutes have usually disintegrated. The Sinclair Family Cemetery in Wainuiomata contains seven unmarked graves of members of the Sinclair family who were buried there between 1869 and 1882. The site possesses both local and personal/family significance. A memorial was erected by descendants and the Wainuiomata Historical Society in 1984, in order “for this site to be finally recognised, as a tribute to our pioneering forbears.”17 Private or family cemeteries were more common in remote regions. On Great Barrier Island, for instance, there

17 Wainuiomata Historical Society, 3.
Figure 51. This 1851 watercolour shows the grave Captain Wakefield who was killed in the 1843 Wairau Incident and was buried where he fell. His lone grave was marked with materials at hand.

are the Sanderson Family and Alcock Family burial grounds.\textsuperscript{18} The island was so remote from Auckland in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that families dealt with their own dead. Maori often adopted use of the family cemetery in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the Te Whiti area of the Wairarapa there are two family burial places connected with the Reiri family: the Makere Urupa and the Hamuera Urupa.\textsuperscript{19} Like the family burial grounds of contemporary Pakeha, these were located in isolated districts, and near to the homestead of the family. It is also likely that burial in a close family urupa was preferable to burial in a more remote Pakeha cemetery, and appealed more to the sense of a society based on whanau and whakapapa.

Lone Graves are the last type of burial ground I have identified. They usually contain the body of only one person, and are often unmarked. Located in once remote and isolated areas, they tell of untimely and accidental death, and speak of the hardships endured in nineteenth century New Zealand. People were buried at or near the scene of death and their graves were marked in whatever was at hand, usually wood (Figure 51.). This means that the location of many early lone graves is now no longer exactly known, such as the grave of sealer and whaler Jack Price who died at Preservation Inlet in 1819. His totara slab has, over the course of almost 200 years, disappeared. Many lone graves are located in the goldfields, where chilled and drowned bodies were not uncommon sights along the routes to the diggings.\textsuperscript{20} At Miller’s Flat in Central Otago two graves lie side by side. One hold the remains of a young miner found drowned in the Molyneux after a heavy flood in the spring of 1865. Never identified, his body was buried nearby by William Rigney, the miner who discovered him.\textsuperscript{21} In an example of the translation of traditional British practices into colonial materials, Rigney erected a post and rail fence of manuka around the grave. At the head he placed a short length of black pine planking on which he had burned the words “Somebody’s Darling Lies Buried Here”. Rigney maintained a


\textsuperscript{19}Wairarapa Times-Age, 11 May 1979, in Te Whiti - Notes, also site notes and news clippings, 1977-1985 (88-070-10/12), Alexander Turnbull Library.


\textsuperscript{21}Jim Barclay, Otago history information provided by Richard Higham, (Misc-MS-0799), Hocken Library, University of Otago.
lifelong interest in the grave, and on his death in the early 1900s requested to be buried next to the unknown man. Two marble tombstones and the original wooden board now mark their graves. In 1893, when surveyor Joshua Morgan died while working in the Tongarakau Gorge in Taranaki, his body was simply buried by the bush track and marked by a rough picket fence. Today it stands on the Stratford-Tatu highway, marked by a concrete fence and cross.

The location of these burial places was governed by a variety of factors. Necessity, as in the case of isolated family cemeteries and lone graves is the most obvious reason. Convenience combined with nineteenth century medical notions was another influential factor. Burial grounds and cemeteries had to be located within walking distance of a settlement, but far enough away to avoid the danger to health thought to caused by proximity to decomposing bodies. The cemeteries of the small towns of Winton, in Southland, and Otepopo (Herbert) in Otago were, therefore, established approximately one kilometre from town. Many early cemeteries were located very close to urban concentrations, such as Wellington’s Bolton Street. As the nineteenth century progressed, however, legislation based on developments in Britain required the closure of urban burial grounds, and the establishment of new cemeteries outside town boundaries. Cemeteries were often placed on hills, a practice which was encouraged by the role of the burial place as an “impressive memento of our mortality”, as promoted by Loudon in Britain. Dunedin’s two great nineteenth century cemeteries, therefore, occupied prominent sites on the hills at each end of the city’s town belt. The Otago Witness noted that the new Northern Cemetery was “so situated as to be never likely to become a nuisance to the Town.” The graves were far enough away to prevent illness from miasma, but visible enough to inspire reflection on death. Hillsides were also popular for their being well drained, once again reflecting the importance of miasmatic theories. Placing cemeteries on hills was also a clever way of combining the best elements of picturesque cemetery design with good use of less economically viable land. The Otago Witness considered the site of Dunedin’s Northern Cemetery:

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22 “Morgan, Joshua, 1858-1893, His grave in the Tangarakau Gorge” (MS-Papers-3715), Alexander Turnbull Library.
23 Loudon quoted in Morley, 49.
25 Before the trees planted in and around the cemeteries matured, the glowing white headstones were visible from one end of the city to the other.
about the best adapted for a Cemetery which could be selected; it is in a remarkably picturesque spot...and the land is for other purposes comparatively useless.  

The cemetery was also close enough to visit for mourning, and sombre recreation.

The layout, plans and designs of New Zealand’s nineteenth century cemeteries are generally simple and utilitarian in plan. Most cemeteries, churchyards and burial grounds were planned on a formal grid pattern. This was simple, practical, and traditional. Churchyards traditionally featured simple rows of graves around the church. Smaller burial grounds and cemeteries, which usually served smaller and less wealthy rural communities most likely employed a simple plan because the graveyard served a purely utilitarian function. A formal and practical grid plan was also fashionable in Britain, with John Claudius Loudon promoting formal grid plans from the 1840s.  

This is not to say all grid-planned cemeteries are influenced directly by Loudon. It is probable, however, that his ideas shaped general opinions in New Zealand on what a good cemetery should be. Described in 1893, the Wanganui Cemetery, with its “rows of sombre columnal cypress on either side of the paths”, was the colonial embodiment of the melancholy and formal cemetery design popular in the nineteenth century.

The layout of larger urban cemeteries often combined elements of modish picturesque design with the formal influences. This was common practice in Britain, where many of the cemeteries created as a result of the 1853 Act were planned with either a picturesque layout or a grid pattern, or a combination of the two. The greatest factor in determining style was size: the larger the cemetery, the more intricate and picturesque it was likely to be. The best examples of this in New Zealand were established in nineteenth century Dunedin. Apparently the civic authorities entertained very sanguine hopes with regard to population increase, and three large cemeteries were opened, in 1857, 1862 and 1872. Selected for their picturesque locations, at each end of the town belt, and their beautiful vistas over the

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27 "Paradise Preserved", 10.
28 Hoben, 21.
29 "Paradise Preserved", 10.
30 I do not think it is any coincidence that New Zealand’s only Scottish settlement featured two of the countries most elaborate nineteenth century cemeteries. Most Scots came from Lowland Scotland, where, in Glasgow and Edinburgh, were located two of Britain’s greatest cemeteries.
Figure 52. The plan of the 1857 Southern Cemetery in Dunedin demonstrates the combination of formal grids and curves. The Catholic section (left) is particularly picturesque.

Figure 53. Saint Sepulchre’s Church, from the Anglican portion of the Symonds Street Cemetery, Auckland. 1860s.

harbour, sea and city, the Northern (1872) and Southern (1857) Cemeteries are the most obviously British influenced of our cemeteries.\(^{31}\) The cemeteries included straight and winding paths and drives, crescents and circles. The Presbyterian portion of the Southern Cemetery was planned with a grid focused on circle, a common conceit in cemeteries combining the formal with the picturesque (Figure 52.). Plantings and memorials were other important features. In the Northern Cemetery, the picturesque was enhanced with the addition of a sexton’s cottage.

Few colonial communities, however, were wealthy or large enough to warrant the establishment of large picturesque-influenced cemeteries complete with attractive plantings and paths. Victoria Lawrence’s assumption that the picturesque style “was generally adopted by settlers to New Zealand” is an exaggeration.\(^{32}\) Not only does it reduce the layout of all cemeteries to a single simple statement, it is misleading. No cemeteries in New Zealand were planned on the purely picturesque model perfected in the rural cemeteries of the eastern United States in the early nineteenth century. It is easy to assume that because an historic cemetery contains some old trees, some paths and stones which appear romantic to our taste, that the cemetery must be a picturesque one. Few nineteenth century New Zealanders had the time or resources to plan and ornament cemeteries, when trees needed to be felled, houses built and roads constructed.

Time has done much to soften the bland harshness of many of our early burial grounds through the addition of trees and shrubs. In its conservation plan, the picturesque movement is said to have influenced the design of the Symonds Street Cemetery in Auckland, with its walks, woodland, melancholy monuments, and other features and elements of the picturesque movement.\(^{33}\) Nineteenth century written accounts and photographs demonstrate that there was, however, no cohesive attempt to plan the cemetery along picturesque lines, and that the cemetery looked nothing like an Elysian field of immortality. Dominated by wooden picket grave enclosures (Figure 53.), which divided up the landscape, and bare of trees, the cemetery was further divided into sectarian divisions by fences. In 1864 Mrs Charles Thomson

\(^{31}\) As opposed to churchyards, which are also very British in origin.
\(^{32}\) Lawrence, 18.
\(^{33}\) LA4 Landscape Architects and Planners, 71.
observed that the cemetery, which was over twenty years old, had “no walks, or plantations, no flowers or shrubs on or around any of the graves.” These vital elements of picturesque design were missing. Mrs Thomson further described the Church of England portion as a “damp, dark, unwholesome looking place”, “wretched and forlorn” overrun by “rank weeds, heath and ferns”. Later plantings helped beautify the cemetery, and gave it a more picturesque air.

Plantings, such as the cypress in Wanganui Cemetery, were an integral part of the layout and design of modern formal and picturesque cemeteries in nineteenth century Britain, France and America. Trees were especially popular in the nineteenth century cemetery because of the belief that they were purifiers of the air and limited the spread of zymotic diseases. We have seen that in Christchurch’s cemeteries miasmatic theories encouraged the planting of trees. The planting of trees and shrubs was also necessary to simply soften the harsh and bald landscape of many nineteenth century colonial cemeteries.

Loudon recommended the use of trees traditionally associated with death, such as the cypress, yew and cedar. Evergreens had long been associated with immortality and death, and were important elements of formal and melancholy cemetery design. They were also traditional and familiar to the majority of nineteenth century immigrants. In picturesque design, the use of deciduous trees to create a more park-like and Arcadian atmosphere was common. The planting of shrubs and flowers was also encouraged. In the nineteenth century, the weeping willow was also popularly associated with death, mourning and the cemetery. Although it was ridiculed as a sentimental and romantic invention and joke, its symbolism was just as significant as the cedar and yew to nineteenth century mourners, and its presence in the historic cemetery tells us quite as much about nineteenth century tastes.

The trees used in New Zealand reflect the combination of introduced and indigenous which is characteristic of colonial cemetery development. The fashionable and funereal exotic evergreens of Britain retained an important place in colonial burial places. The holly trees and yews familiar in English churchyards were

35 LA4 Landscape Architects and Planners, 18.
36 Ragon, 116.
Figure 54. Dunedin’s Southern Cemetery, c.1885. Four yew trees mark the corners of the grave at left. Ivy, for remembrance, is also evident.

Hocken Library, University of Otago, Dunedin.
Reference Number: c/n E6869/15.

Figure 55. This 1880s view of the Napier Cemetery shows the wide use of introduced evergreens, particularly the fast growing pine.

Reference Number: G-25821-1/1 - .
Figure 56. Indigenous cabbage trees provide greenery in addition to traditional introduced funereal evergreens such as the yew and ivy in Dunedin’s Northern Cemetery, 1880.

Hocken Library, University of Otago, Dunedin.
Reference Number: c/n E2486/41.

Figure 57. A uniquely planted grave in Bolton Street Cemetery, Wellington, c.1880s. Today many historic graves and cemeteries feature plants, such as roses, which were planted by mourners in the nineteenth century.

Reference Number: G- 31999-1/2 -.
planted in the churchyard of Christ Church near Wellington. In August 1847 John Nairn planted two Mediterranean cypress trees at the foot of the grave of William Bolland, at the request of Mrs Bolland. Significant as perhaps the first exotic trees planted in New Plymouth, these can still be seen today, as well as the historic yew trees and cedar of Lebanon. In Dunedin’s Southern Cemetery yew trees were a common feature (Figure 54.). Pines were also popular cemetery evergreens, with the Californian conifer Pinus Radiata being particularly fashionable in the 1870s. In the Sinclair Family Cemetery macrocarpa trees and pines complement a hedge of Holly trees. Not only was the pine evergreen, it was also fast growing, which recommended it to New Zealand’s bare and new cemeteries (Figure 55.). Many deciduous trees, including the oak, were also used, further encouraging a great variety of plantings in colonial cemeteries. Trees associated with mourning in popular culture were also used, such as the derided weeping willow. In the French Cemetery on L’Aube Hill sentimentalism combined with patriotism, resulting in the 167-year-old willow trees which now mark the site. Often it was necessary to improvise, and if introduced plantings could not be had, then native trees provided adequate substitutes. It is probable that many New Zealanders came to acquire a taste for indigenous flora, which was also well suited to providing an evergreen character to the cemetery. The cabbage tree and the yew, therefore, stood side by side in the nineteenth century cemetery (Figure 56.).

The great variety of plantings we can see today was also encouraged by the fact that mourners themselves planted many on and around graves (Figure 57.). In 1854 Eliza Maundrell wrote to her sister, “I have seen my darling’s grave today. It is indeed a dismal looking place. I am so anxious to do something for it.” She also mentioned a “wish to put flowers over it that will flower summer and winter”. Many of the plants we can see today in the historic cemetery exist as expression of grief and love. Flowers were often used, such as roses from England, ivy with its connotations of immortality and friendship, periwinkle, camellias, lilies, violets and a

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38 Alington, Goodly Stones and Timbers, 55-57.
39 LA4 Landscape Architects and Planners, 13.
40 Wainuiomata Historical Society, 8.
41 Ibid., 462.
42 Porter and MacDonald, 462.
wide range of bulb species common in the Victorian graveyard. The planting of trees and shrubs in New Zealand's nineteenth century burial places was rarely part of a cohesive cemetery development plan. Plantings were often haphazard, of great variety, following no particular theme, and carried out over the years. There was often a serious lack of planning in terms of plantings, with little regard for habits and future growth, which now poses problems in many historic cemeteries.

Those historic plantings that have survived are integral to the landscapes of death created by New Zealanders in the nineteenth century. As Warwick Rodwell argues, "trees and shrubs are as much a part of the man-made landscape of churchyards, as are the structures and monuments." The cemeteries of the nineteenth century were important in the colonial transformation of the landscape. In this process the contribution of gardens and farming have been examined, but not the cemetery. Our historic cemeteries have significance as landscapes which symbolise, through their mixture of exotic and native flora, the relationship between introduced notions of landscape and the existing indigenous flora of Aotearoa.

Another element of the landscape and layout of New Zealand's nineteenth century cemeteries was its division into sectarian or denominational divisions. These divisions are telling of the importance of religion to nineteenth century New Zealander, and highlight the ethnic and religious fractures and identities in colonial society. As we saw in Chapter Three religion maintained a central role in the lives of nineteenth century New Zealanders, be they English, Irish, Chinese or Jewish. This was particularly so in death. Religion was an important part of one's identity, and association with a particular church, or religion, was asserted in death through burial in a particular part of the cemetery consecrated to that church. Burial grounds were an expression of religion in the land. Among Anglicans, the largest denominational group in New Zealand, Roman Catholics and Jews there was a strong desire for burial in consecrated ground. For dissenter groups such as Methodists and Presbyterians, there existed an equally strong desire for burial in unconsecrated land. In New Zealand, unlike England where the Anglican Church dominated burial grounds into

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43 LA4 Landscape Architects and Planners, 87.
44 In some cases historic trees threaten historic graves. The problem is deciding which takes precedence.
45 Rodwell, 132.
Figure 58. A hedge separates the Church of England portion of Dunedins Southern 
Cemetery in this photograph, taken around 1880.

Hocken Library, University of Otago, Dunedin.
Reference Number: c/n E2906/33.

Figure 59. A row of family and individual plots demarcated by iron fences in the 
Bolton Street Cemetery.

Author's own photograph.
the 1850s, all religious groups were catered for. This resulted in divisions dedicated
to the burial of Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Dissenters (including Methodists and
Presbyterians)\(^{46}\), Jews\(^{47}\) and Chinese. The Chinese presumably fell into the category
‘Confucians, Buddhists, pagans’ which was introduced in the Census of 1881,
replacing the 1871 category of ‘pagans, Chinese or heathens’.\(^{48}\) Those Chinese who
were buried with Europeans were Christian.\(^{49}\) Occasionally, fences marked the
sectarian divisions. In other cases hedges were used (Figure 58.). The practice of
dividing the cemetery into denominational portions declined as the nineteenth century
drew on. For instance, the Southern Cemetery in Dunedin (1857), is laid out in strict
sectarian divisions, while the Northern Cemetery (1872), is non-denominational.

Within these sectarian divisions the landscape of the cemetery was further
broken down into family and individual plots (Figure 59.). One of the most notable
features of our nineteenth century cemeteries to modern eyes is the profusion of
family burial plots. As Jeane argues, “The Victorian cult of death had a significant
effect upon urban American cemeteries, particularly expressed in the
compartmentalization of the cemetery into family grave plots”\(^{50}\). The same process
occurred in New Zealand. Headstones may list two or three, or up to ten or twelve
individuals. The family connection is often stated: ‘children of’ or ‘wife of the
above’. These reflect the importance of the family unit, and family connections in
colonial New Zealand. The intensification of family life which occurred in the
Victorian era was continued into the next life. The practice of establishing family
burial plots was also a middle class phenomenon which imitated the practices of the
nobility in the Old World. The family grave was a bourgeois form of expression,
concerned with not only the immortality of the soul, but of the family name. Also, the
early age at which many died encouraged the sentimental practice of being buried
with family and parents, rather than in a cold and lonely grave.

\(^{46}\) The dissenter or non-conformist portion of many cemeteries was, or is, called the Presbyterian
portion because of the large number of Presbyterian burials.

\(^{47}\) Jewish portions often had land taken away over time, because the small Jewish populations, which
often declined, meant that much of the land was unused. The Auckland (Symonds Street) Cemeteries
Act, (1908), as well as closing the cemetery, gave the Council the right to erect public baths and a
storage reservoir for water on a portion of the (unused) Jewish cemetery.

\(^{48}\) Ng, 77.

\(^{49}\) Ibid., 63.

\(^{50}\) Jeane, 119.
Figure 60. An 1850s headstone and footstone in the Bolton Street Cemetery.

Author's own photograph, 2004.

Figure 61. An elaborate carved stone monument from the 1870s, Bolton Street Cemetery. It incorporates many popular pagan-inspired images including the urn and shroud, within a Roman-influenced design.

Author's own photograph, 2004.
Gravemarkers, or headstones and monuments, are the most conspicuous element of the cemetery. This is particularly true of the nineteenth century cemetery, whose monuments appear larger, bolder, and more decorative in contrast to modern efforts at personal memorialisation. The word cemetery instantly conjures up images of monuments and headstones, and, indeed, headstones are an integral feature of almost every historic cemetery or burial ground. But not all cemeteries still possess all their original, or indeed any, headstones. Many early memorials were made out of wood and have since deteriorated. Even stone markers have not always resisted the combined destructive efforts of man and nature. A lack of headstones does not, however, decrease the historic value of any burial ground.

The individual or family monument had, by the time New Zealand was settled, become the norm. It was the material expression of the cult of individualism, which was developing in the industrialised West. In colonial society, where egalitarianism was held dear, the worth of the individual increased. The phenomenon of mass memorialisation in the West was also a product of the increasing use of the cemetery as an arena for the conspicuous display of wealth. This may seem at odds with egalitarianism in New Zealand, unless we remember that the egalitarian ideal was sometimes more myth than reality. Differences in wealth and status did exist in colonial society, and are expressed in the material culture of our cemeteries.

The headstone was the most common form of monument in New Zealand, as it was in England. Other forms were also relatively common, particularly as the century progressed, such as the obelisk and the pedestal and urn. In New Zealand the vertical element of Old World monuments was retained in favour of the horizontal element, and the altar and tabletop tombs of Britain were rarely replicated here. They were expensive, and by the time New Zealander’s could afford such luxuries, they were out of style. Early nineteenth century Australian cemeteries, in contrast, contain many more. Also, unlike Britain and America, footstones were rarely used, except in very early and elaborate examples (Figure 60.). Generally, monuments in New Zealand tended towards greater simplicity than in contemporary America, France and Britain. Elaborate sculpture was rare until the late nineteenth century. Occasionally,

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51 Paupers or 'poor persons' were usually buried in an unmarked grave. There will invariably be far more bodies than stones in a nineteenth century burial ground or cemetery.
52 Rodwell, 164.
Figure 62. Another view of part of the Nelson Cemetery taken in the 1890s shows the Egyptian style chapel. Although based on British examples such as Highgate Cemetery in London, it is completely colonial in its translation into wood.


Figure 63. An early example of the popular urn and pedestal monument, Bolton Street Cemetery.

Author's own photograph, 2004.
the full repertoire of the mason's skills would be called into the production of a large and elaborate monument to a well known, wealthy, or respected individual or family (Figure 61.). Larger monuments such as these are not uncommon, while family mausoleums are. Constructed in low numbers around the country, many date from around the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and "may reflect an increasing confidence in the prospects of the colony at the time."  

Never separate from international developments, New Zealand's nineteenth century monumental masons borrowed liberally from what Peggy McDowell calls the "common architectural vocabulary of the West". This included the Classical, Gothic and Egyptian styles, which were especially suited to the commemorative arts and mortuary architecture (Figure 62.). As in Britain, New Zealand's cemeteries often contain a seemingly incongruous mix of pagan and Christian style memorials. The gothic headstone moulders alongside the titling Egyptian obelisk, and Christian crosses vie with pagan urns. All were equally valid forms of memorialisation in Victorian eyes, and Christian sentiment and symbolism was often expressed through a pagan-inspired monument. Headstones were often rounded, Gothic arch, trefoil, quatrefoil, or what I have called Roman. The pagan architectural influences of the ancient world found favour with colonial New Zealanders, and our nineteenth century cemeteries feature many Roman cinerary urns, sometimes draped to symbolise mourning, or erupting with flame, symbolising immortality (Figure 63.). In Dunedin during the 1870s and early 1880s Roman style headstones were extremely popular. Carved out of Oamaru stone, which readily lent itself to this style, they are an example of a regional fashion encouraged by access to suitable materials. Christian forms such as the cross were not, contrary to popular perception, heavily used in the nineteenth century cemetery. As in Australia, fashions in grave architecture followed those in Britain. Griffin observes, "The models for what can be seen in an Australian cemetery are very familiar in the graveyards of Great Britain." The same can be said of New Zealand, to a degree. The exuberant Victorian eclecticism which characterised nineteenth century British, Australian and American cemeteries was, however, more restrained in colonial New Zealand. This does not mean that

53 LA4 Landscape Architects and Planners, 49.
54 McDowell and Meyer, 5.
55 Griffin, 55.
individualism was lacking. In Dunedin’s Southern Cemetery is the grave of James Balfour, the Colonial Marine Engineer who drowned at Timaru in 1869. His headstone is flanked by two miniature lighthouses and features a model lifeboat, all in Oamaru stone.

The monuments erected in New Zealand’s cemeteries were full of the Victorian symbolism of death: the broken column, which speaks of premature death, the clasped hands of farewell and reunion, the cross and the angel, the draped urn, and the book of life. Gilbert rightly observes that:

If one wished to express faith or hope, despair of loss, occupation or lodge membership, sleep, tragedy or eternity, the Victorian designers and stonemasons could do it without inscribing a single word, and often with consummate skill and appealing sensitivity, if not always with sophisticated subtlety.\(^{56}\)

The Victorian love of display and social competition is often mentioned as the reason for the large Victorian headstone. However, none of this social conformity or display means that the grief experienced by nineteenth century New Zealanders was any less real. The monuments they left behind testify to the strength of their emotions, be they sadness, grief, acceptance, happiness, anger, regret or joy. These emotions were simply expressed through the modes acceptable in their time. In nineteenth century New Zealand, because of its relatively small size, and easily accessed settlements, the same style of headstone, and symbols of death, mourning and eternity appear in cemeteries everywhere.

These memorials and monuments were made in a great variety of materials. The earliest European graves in New Zealand were usually marked, if at all, with a slab of wood. By the 1850s and 1860s New Zealanders were fashioning wooden headstones, which displayed great skill, as well as the translation of traditional forms and practices into new materials. Few people could bear such an expense as importing a headstone, which encouraged the use of local materials such as wood.\(^{57}\) Unfortunately, New Zealand’s climate has tended not to favour the survival of wooden markers. A handful from the 1850s survive in Wellington’s Bolton Street

\(^{56}\) Lionel Gilbert, *A Grave Look at History: Glimpses of a Vanishing Form of Folk Art* (Sydney: John Ferguson, 1980), 34.

\(^{57}\) Stone gravemarkers were often put up in later years on the death of other relatives.
Figure 64. These two surviving wooden grave markers in the Bolton Street Cemetery demonstrate both the versatility and vulnerability of wooden headstones.

Author's own photograph, 2004.

Figure 65. An early sandstone grave marker in the Bolton Street Cemetery dated 1848. The stone was probably imported from Australia.

Author's own photograph, 2004.
Figure 66. A slate headstone, Bolton Street Cemetery. Imported from Britain between the 1840s and 1860s, slate stones are largely resistant to weathering and can be found in early cemeteries throughout the country.

Author’s own photograph, 2004.

Figure 67. Late nineteenth century marble headstones with lead lettering, Bolton Street Cemetery. Lilies were popularly associated with mourning, and were a common Victorian grave planting.

Author’s own photograph, 2004.
Figure 68. A nineteenth century Oamaru stone grave marker in the Bolton Street Cemetery. Used throughout the country, particularly in Otago, this soft limestone has often weathered badly.

Author’s own photograph, 2004.

Figure 69. Two examples of Victorian cast iron headstones, Bolton Street Cemetery. The marker on the left consists of a frame into which new plates could be inserted, and commemorates the deaths of five members of the Wallace family during a scarlet fever epidemic in 1865.

Author’s own photograph, 2004.
Cemetery (Figure 64.). The marker erect by William Rigney in 1863 for ‘Somebody’s Darling’ survived in the drier climate of Central Otago. Others have been removed inside churches which has saved them from deterioration, such as many of the exquisite carved wooden markers erected to the memory of European casualties in the Land Wars of the 1860s (Figure 49.). For many nineteenth century New Zealanders, a wooden grave surround was their only monument. Erected in great numbers from the 1840s to the 1880s, and often painted white, they were one of the greatest distinguishing features between cemeteries of the old world and the new. These have rarely survived, because of their vulnerability to rot, and their being cleared away in cemetery ‘tidy-ups’. The tendency for stone to outlast wood means that today we see only a distorted picture of what our nineteenth century cemeteries looked like.

As New Zealand became more densely settled from the 1840s and 1850s, and people had the money to spend on, and access to, stone headstones, stone became the material of choice, as it was in Britain. At first many of these were imported as blanks. From Australia came sandstone blanks, which were then inscribed in New Zealand (Figure 65.). In 1850 a handsome headstone of sandstone imported from Hobart was erected to the memory of Mrs Margaret Millar, a lodging-house keeper, in Bolton Street Cemetery. As stone and monumental masons became established in the colony, and local supplies of workable stone were accessed, more New Zealanders were able to purchase permanent monuments. The creation of mortuary monuments involved a wide range of skills, including stone cutting, polishing, carving, letter cutting, lead filling (leading), brick and stone construction, casting and rendering, fabrication and erection of iron fences both wrought and cast, wood turning and machining. Both local and imported materials were used in these processes, lending a distinctive air to New Zealand’s cemeteries. Imported stone, however, continued to adorn the greatest part of the landscapes of our nineteenth century cemeteries, with the rise in popularity of marble and ornate sculpture. Slate from Britain, marble imported from Italy, and granite from Aberdeen can all be found in our nineteenth century cemeteries, in addition to local types of stone, such as Oamaru stone (Figures 66, 67 and 68.).

58 Alington, Unquiet Earth, 201.
Figure 70. The gravestone of John Cowper in the Bolton Street Cemetery informs the passerby that he was "Sometime Quarter Master Sergt of the 76th Regt.”.

Author's own photograph, 2004.

Figure 71. Hugh McKenzie's headstone in the Bolton Street Cemetery proudly relates his Scottish origins and birth in the county of Argyleshire.

Author's own photograph, 2004.
With the ingenuity characteristic of the Victorian era, a host of other materials was employed in the construction of tombstones and monuments. In the larger industrialised centres Gothic-style headstones of cast-iron were available, with convenient removable plates which slotted in to allow the easy addition of names to the marker as more family members took up residence in the family plot (Figure 69.). In Dunedin’s Southern Cemetery is a columnar monument of terracotta, whose bright orange tinge contrasts with the drab stone of surrounding monuments. ‘Kiwi’ ingenuity also found expression in the cemetery. In 1888 William Brown, perhaps too poor to pay for a stone marker for his seven-year-old son Willie, made and fired a ceramic one at the brick-makers where he worked.\(^59\) This can still be seen today in the Waikumete Cemetery.

Whether incised, painted, gilded, or formed with imperishable lead, it is the inscriptions on the monuments to which we pay most attention when walking through the historic cemetery. Genealogists in New Zealand have long recognised their potential to provide information on individuals and families.\(^60\) Such information includes how they died, occupation, religious affiliation, maiden name, date and place of death and birth, age, and membership of lodges (Figure 70.).\(^61\) Even if the information is not new to the researcher, it can give added insight into their ancestor’s lives, relationships, and attitudes. Marriage is often acknowledged, and women were often mentioned in terms of their connection to their husband or other male relations. As well as recording the lives of individuals, some monuments also recorded their faces. Photographic portraits were often used on stones in nineteenth century America.\(^62\) In New Zealand the practice was rare, although there are two examples in Dunedin’s Southern Cemetery where cartes-de-visites were embedded in the monument under glass.

On the thousands of monuments erected in New Zealand’s nineteenth century cemeteries were inscribed all manner of epitaphs, extracts, biblical quotations and biographical detail. The typical inscription began with “Sacred to the Memory of....”

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\(^59\) Bridges, 13.
\(^60\) One of the few groups to recognise the value of the historic cemetery as a research source, the New Zealand Society of Genealogists has compiled headstone transcripts of virtually every (Pakeha) cemetery in the country.
reflecting the spread of the cult of memory in the West, which had first found expression in Pere Lachaise in Paris. The names of the deceased were then listed, with dates of birth and death. In addition to this the headstone might contain any number of additional inscriptions. For, as Graeme Griffin argues, monumental inscriptions provided:

opportunities to reflect on life and death, to console the surviving, to reinforce faith, to admonish the unwary, to attack enemies and to acknowledge the particularity of the person buried beneath them.  

Inscriptions could reach, what seem to us today, epic proportions. Aries warns against imposing modern taste upon nineteenth century inscriptions. “In their naïve and garrulous manner, which we tend to find ridiculous and hypocritical,” he argues, “the epitaphs of the nineteenth century express a real and profound feeling, which the historian has no right to deride.”

Biblical verses and references to God, Christ, and the Resurrection were common themes. In a society in which religion maintained a place of importance, particularly in time of death, one of the most common accompaniments to biographical details was a scriptural or religious text. “Thy will be done”, “Abide With Me” or “I am the Resurrection and the Life” were popular examples. Symbols with religious connotations, including the anchor of hope and faith, and the open book of Life such enforced these texts. Religious sentiment was often combined with the romantic attitudes toward death then current in Western society, and which found expression in the New Zealand cemetery where the dead were said to be “Gone but not Forgotten”, or were “Only Sleeping”.

New Zealand’s nineteenth century cemeteries, like those of Britain, were places of moral improvement. As well as enforcing religious conviction, epitaphs and inscriptions encouraged reflection on the life to come. In Dunedin’s Northern Cemetery visitors are still advised to:

Stop traveller, ere you go by,
As you are now, so once was I.
As I am now so must you be,
So prepare yourself to follow me.

63 Griffin, 57.
64 Aries, The Hour of Our Death, 529.
Figure 72. The wooden fence which surrounds this grave in the Bolton Street Cemetery is distinguished through the use of a thistle motif, representing the Scottish origins of its inhabitant.

Author's own photograph, 2004.

Figure 73. This marble gravestone from the Jewish section of the Bolton Street Cemetery has both English and Hebrew inscriptions. The broken column was a popular style and symbolised a life cut short.

Author's own photograph, 2004.
An example of an epitaph which took the form of a message from the grave, this verse was made intimate and ominous by the use of the first-person conversational form, simulating a discourse between the dead and the living.\(^{65}\) The cemetery also improved the populace through example, and the lives of exemplary men were displayed for the didactic benefit of visitors to the cemetery. In Dunedin, whose cemeteries were places visited by the public, the graves of prominent men such as Captain Cargill, William Larnach, Thomas Bracken and the Rev. Thomas Burns were elaborate monuments which proclaimed the merit of these individuals.

As well as reflecting the religious nature of colonial society, inscriptions and their accompanying symbols also reflected the different ethnic groups which made up New Zealand's nineteenth century population. The cemetery was a forum for asserting ethnic identity, and the use of language was one way in which this was asserted. Maori headstones carried inscriptions in Te Reo, which clearly proclaimed the ethnic identity of the deceased, even if many people could not read it. Often the English, Irish or Scottish county of nativity is mentioned on headstones (Figure 71.).\(^ {66}\) Certainly, there is no better place to see the famous Scottish heritage of Dunedin than in its cemeteries, with its many “Late of _____ County, Scotland”. Such declarations illustrate the importance that one's country of origin had in determining identity in the new world. Roots in the old world were not severed by migration to New Zealand, and ethnic identities remained important. Shirley Kendall, writing on the Symonds Street Cemetery, observes, “The thing which shines through is their pride in the land of their birth, be it Ireland, Scotland or England.”\(^ {67}\) Ethnic or national symbols were sometimes used in conjunction with, or instead of, declarations of nativity. The Irish shamrock, Scottish thistle and English rose are obvious examples (Figure 72.).\(^ {68}\)

For the Chinese in nineteenth century New Zealand, place of origin was very important, and was almost always included in the headstone inscription. On 104 of the 114 headstones in the Chinese portion of the Southern Cemetery in Dunedin the

\(^{65}\) John Gary Brown, 33. Originally from England, this verse, with variations, was also popular in America, being inscribed “ten thousand times, from Indiana to Colorado”.

\(^{66}\) Identification with one's county of origin was probably encouraged by the fact that some counties or regions were more prone to migration to New Zealand than others.


\(^{68}\) Gilbert, 34.
county of origin is named. Both the county and village names are often recorded on the stone with the name or names of the deceased, with the dates of death and birth following. Apart from their almost universal inclusion of place of origin, Chinese headstones stand out in our nineteenth century cemeteries for two other reasons. First, they are inscribed in Chinese script. Even though most New Zealanders cannot read the inscription proclaiming their place of origin, we know by the language used that the headstones mark Chinese graves. Second, Chinese headstones, although made from the same materials, are usually much smaller than the headstones of their European contemporaries. They also tend to lack the ornamental iron enclosures which were popular among Pakeha New Zealanders. In the goldfield cemeteries of Victoria the Chinese erected structures required by religious practices, such as the brick funerary oven, c.1865, in the cemetery at Maldon. These are absent from New Zealand’s cemeteries.

Despite the large number of Chinese in nineteenth century New Zealand, there are noticeably few Chinese graves. One reason is that Chinese graves have proved particularly susceptible to vandalism and neglect. The other reason is that, ultimately, New Zealand was not the last resting place of many who died in this country. The Chinese practice of exhuming bodies for reburial in China means that the early Chinese graves in Hokitika and the few others which are to be found

69 Southern Cemetery Dunedin Chinese Portion, vol.5, 6. One of these 12 Counties, Poon Yue, was the home of 66 of these 104 Chinese men. In the mid-nineteenth century, Poon Yue was a densely populated County, and a lack of employment resulted in a high number of poor among the population. The situation was worsened after 1851 by widespread fighting in China as the T'ai-P'ing Rebellion attempted to overthrow the Manchu Dynasty. Many men left Poon Yue for Hong Kong during this time, or ventured even further, to the goldfields of America, Australia and New Zealand during the 1850s and 1860s.

70 Southern Cemetery Dunedin: Chinese Portion, Dunedin: NZSG, Dunedin Branch, 7.
71 Sagazio.
72 Between 1866 and 1900 there were as many as 5,000 Chinese in New Zealand at one time, and possibly 1000 deaths. However, the known Chinese miners’ graves in Central Otago, Southland and on the West Coast are remarkably few. There are a few known Chinese graves located away from cemeteries, as at Wakaia and Nokomai, but even including these the Central Otago total adds up to perhaps fewer than 150. Ng, 66.
73 Yet they are such a significant part of the country’s cultural heritage, being one of the few lasting memorials to the nineteenth century Chinese of New Zealand.
74 Although they never intended to live out their days in New Zealand, many did die here. However, Read notes: “their funeral rites being permitted and respected, their bones were later disinterred by their fellow Chinese, under European medical jurisdiction, and sent back to their homes. 15 Chinese from Hokitika were exhumed to return to China in 1902 aboard the ill-fated S.S. Ventnor; which hit a reef and disappeared a day out of Wellington with its entire crew and cargo of 499 exhumed Chinese bodies. Read, 13. Griffin argues, if the bodies made it back to China, “there could be some reasonable guarantee that the appropriate rites would continue to be performed at the correct seasons.” Griffin, 109.
elsewhere in New Zealand are unusual. Exhumation, argues James Ng, “was an extension of the age-old Chinese custom to be buried in the soil where they were born.” Living in socially and geographically isolated, male dominated communities, it is no wonder that they cherished such a wish. Almost without exception Chinese graves contain a single adult male, for, unlike their European contemporaries, the Chinese in New Zealand usually had no families.

Inscriptions are also the most distinctive feature of nineteenth century Jewish graves, which are products of the small, but vigorous, Jewish communities that once existed in many areas. Jewish headstones are often found in the cemeteries of places populated for short periods as during the gold rushes of the 1860s. The most obvious distinguishing feature of Jewish headstones is their use of Hebrew, as well as English, in the inscription, and use of the Hebrew calendar (Figure 73.). Some Jewish headstones also feature what is known as “literary embroidery”. For example, in Nelson’s Wakapuaka Cemetery is the nineteenth century grave of Abraham Davis who died age 25, on the sixth day of Nisan, nine days before Passover. His epitaph reads “Above Beyond the sky Reached His soul And Made its way to God, to find peace.” The first letters spell out his name. Hebrew was not always well known, and several incorrectly written Hebrew inscriptions exist in Dunedin’s Southern Cemetery. The presence of Hebrew on a tombstone clearly announced the Jewish heritage of a family or individual. The use of Hebrew could be combined with Jewish symbols, such as the tablets of the law, and the Star of David which has political and religious significance, symbolising the ancient state of Israel.

The walls, fences and grave enclosures which were erected in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are integral components of the landscapes of our historic cemeteries. The cemetery was a reflection of contemporary living society, and the

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75 Adshead, 34.
76 Ng, 66.
77 A noticeable exception is the grave of Choie Sew Hoy in Dunedin’s Southern Cemetery. Sew Hoy’s grave represents an example of intermarriage and the contribution of Chinese to New Zealand society.
78 Both Nelson and Timaru also possess several Jewish graves within their larger nineteenth century cemeteries, although neither town has an organised Jewish community today. This demonstrates how historic cemeteries can indicate former ethnic and religious populations, reflecting largely forgotten chapters of our history.
80 Ibid., 21.
city of the dead, like the living, had a well-defined boundary. Within both were clearly defined neighbourhoods, made up of privately and individually owned parcels of land. Individual, family, ethnic and religious identities shaped, and were in turn enforced by, the material culture of the cemetery. The cemetery wall or fence demarcated the realm of the living from the dead. A wall or fence enclosing the cemetery was often one of the first concerns of early settlers, with livestock roaming freely about towns and settlements. In burial grounds and cemeteries they had a tendency to knock over stones and enclosures, and trample graves. A fence was also a prerequisite for consecration of a burial ground or cemetery. Those living in the Diocese of Waiapu were informed in 1881 that:

The ground must be securely enclosed with a paling or other sufficient fence, and gates, to prevent the intrusion of animals: and otherwise be put into decent order prior to the Consecration.81

Like grave enclosures, these early fences were constructed out of timber, often very roughly (Figure 41.). Again, like other early wooden structures, these have usually not survived. Not only were they susceptible to rot and replacement, but wooden palings also provided a convenient source of fuel for irreverent neighbours. In 1882, The Cemeteries Act made it compulsory for every part of a cemetery and burial ground to be enclosed by a wall or fence.82 As settlements matured, more permanent wood, iron and stone walls and fences were erected, as well as hedges, which today are integral and attractive components of our historic cemeteries.

Within the enclosed space of the cemetery, the landscape was often divided into denominational divisions, which were occasionally demarcated by a fence, hedge or wall. Sectarian divisions reflected and enhanced the feeling of religious and ethnic identity in colonial society. Fences separating sectarian portions were most common in those early cemeteries, such as Bolton Street, where each portion was managed as a separate cemetery by a board of trustees of that denomination. Fences were removed later in the nineteenth and twentieth century as public authorities assumed ownership of closed early cemeteries. Some survive today, such as the nineteenth century stone wall enclosing the Jewish portion of the Symonds Street Cemetery. These are

81 The Forms of Consecrating Churches and Burial Grounds in the Diocese of Waiapu: Together With The Order to be Observed In Laying the Cornerstone of A Church (Napier: R. C. Harding, 1881), n.p.
82 The Cemeteries Act, (1882), 530.
Figure 74. This 1860s photograph of Saint Mary’s church, New Plymouth, taken from Marsland Hill, shows the enclosures which protected graves and trees from being trampled by the stock which were kept within the churchyard.

Reference Number: F-125009-1/2 - .
Figure 75. “Cemetery Hill”, or the Bolton Street Cemetery in Wellington, 1856. This watercolour by Mr Chapman shows the site of the late Mr C. H. Piper’s grave.

Figure 76. Decorative iron fences form an important component of the cemetery landscape in Milton, c.1902.

Family Albums, Mary Stewart.
significant landscape features, reflecting the ethnic and religious identities which were present in colonial New Zealand society.

The denominational portions were, in turn, divided into privately owned individual and family plots. The “topography of the cemetery,” notes Aries, “reproduces the society as a whole, just as a relief map reproduces the contours of a piece of land. All are brought together in the same enclosure, but each has his own place.” At first these individual and family graves were fenced through necessity, to prevent wandering stock from trampling on the grave, prior to the enclosure of a cemetery. Even when cemeteries and burial grounds were enclosed, they were sometimes used for gazing stock, as in Saint Mary’s churchyard in New Plymouth (Figure 74.). The once ubiquitous white paling or picket fence was the most common form of grave surround in New Zealand, as the simplest and least expensive method of effectually marking a grave before headstones became widely accessible. The fence was often elaborated on with turned work and stop chamfered corner posts (Figure 40.). So common were these picket fences that New Zealand’s nineteenth century burial ground and cemeteries were completely unlike the British and European models which they are often assumed to have simply copied. When Charlotte Godley arrived in Wellington 1850, she spoke of “Cemetery Hill” close behind their house, “with some tombs sprinkled over it, with neat white palings” (Figure 75.). This is just one of the instances where the colonial conditions encouraged, or necessitated, divergence from British practices. Few of these picket enclosures survive, and Margaret Alington comments on disconcerted family historians who, although the record of an ancestor’s death appears in a newspaper or a burial register, cannot find the grave.

Later in the century cast, and sometimes wrought, iron in rich and exuberant designs was used extensively to enclose graves (Figure 76.). Although grave enclosures were no longer necessary to guard against cattle and goats, such decorative fences appealed to the Victorian love of ornamentation, and paralleled contemporary

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83 Aries, *The Hour of Our Death*, 503.
84 LA4 Landscape Architects and Planners, 41.
85 Godley, 53.
87 These cast iron fences are also important components of our industrial heritage.
Figure 77. The 1860s mortuary chapel in the Anglican portion of the Bolton Street Cemetery, c.1890s.


Figure 78. The 1857 sexton's cottage in the Anglican portion of the Bolton Street Cemetery, Wellington.

Author’s own photograph, 2004.
colonial trends in domestic architecture. The clear demarcation of private individual and family graves is also reflective of the notion of the grave as private property. In the Northern Cemetery of Dunedin, it was the intention of the Town Board “to fence the land, and to lay it off in small plots which will be open to the public for sale, so that the burial places of families will become private property”. In this way, the landscape of the cemetery was shaped by the importance of private property in colonial New Zealand. Ownership was a measure of individual success, and the cemetery was used as a public forum for asserting this success. As D. Stannard notes, “the individualistic forces of commerce and acquisitiveness” shaped the cemetery. The excessive use of iron and concrete enclosures in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries meant that New Zealand’s cemeteries continued to evolve along a unique path. In contemporary American rural cemeteries, private enclosures and fences were often prohibited, as they broke up the park-like landscape into little parcels of private land.

Graves and monuments are not the only important architectural features of the historic New Zealand cemetery. Many cemeteries, particularly urban and larger ones, also included a variety of other structures related to burial. In English cemeteries, “Chapels, lodges, walls and other structures are the largest architectural presence within cemeteries….They form key visual elements in the overall design and deserve careful upkeep.” These types of structures are not so common in New Zealand, yet where they exist they are also integral components of the cemetery landscape.

Mortuary chapels are one of the most common type of architectural structures in our historic cemeteries. These were constructed by denominational groups for the purpose of conducting funeral services according to the rites of that sect. In 1850 the tiny Jewish population of Auckland subscribed to build a small chapel in their portion of the Symonds Street Cemetery. Chapels were also erected in the Catholic and Anglican portions. Mortuary chapels are often very small and utilitarian, yet attractive (Figure 77.). Once again, they reflect that religion maintained a place at the heart of colonial society and its rituals, shaping the material culture of the cemetery.

90 “Paradise Preserved”, 6.
91 LA4 Landscape Architects and Planners, 20. The Jewish population numbered around 22.
The use of mortuary chapels declined in the twentieth century with changing patterns of death and its attendant rituals. Chapels have often been neglected and allowed to fall into disrepair, or have even been removed. Those that survive are important elements in the cemetery landscape. Another example is the attractive octagonal chapel in Palmerston North's Terrace End Cemetery.

Miscellaneous other structures also featured in some of New Zealand's larger nineteenth century cemeteries. One of these was the morgue. A gothic-inspired example survives in Dunedin's Southern Cemetery. Sextons' cottages are another type of structure. The employment of sextons, following British practice, led to the construction of cottages to house them and their families in the cemetery grounds. If the sexton maintained the grounds of a particular denomination his residence was located in that part of the cemetery devoted to the burial of members of that sect. In the Anglican portion of Bolton Street Cemetery stands the cottage built for the Church of England sexton in 1857 (Figure 78.). Not all cemeteries were divided into denominational portions, and near the entrance of Dunedin's Northern Cemetery stands the elegant and substantial cottage erected in 1872 for the sexton of that cemetery (Figure 39.). Cremation was only just beginning to gain public favour in the years prior to the First World War. That cremation was coming to be seen as a viable and acceptable option to burial is reflected in the crematorium at Karori Cemetery. Built in 1909, it was reputedly the first in the Southern Hemisphere.92 One other type of architectural structure, which can be found in New Zealand's nineteenth century burial grounds and cemeteries, are memorials which were specifically erected to commemorate major events, particularly war. In Saint Mary's churchyard, for instance, are memorials commemorating both the Land Wars of the nineteenth century and the Boer War.

The New Zealand landscape is dotted with hundreds of cemeteries, urupa, burial grounds and churchyards, products of the processes and influences examined in Chapters One, Two, Three and Four. The burial places which were created in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can be classed into ten types. These are Maori urupa and burial grounds, which represented a fusion of traditional Maori ideas and practices relating to death; early European burial grounds; mission burial

92 Cleaver, 9.
grounds, with their unique religious history; churchyard burial grounds, which reflect the fact that New Zealand was settled in the time of transition from churchyard to cemetery in Britain, and that religion and burial were intimately related; the municipal urban cemeteries which were established throughout New Zealand in the nineteenth century; small town and rural cemeteries, which are generally smaller examples of their urban contemporaries; goldfields cemeteries, which are the only major type influenced by major occupational and economic ties; the cemeteries and graves of those killed in the conflicts of the New Zealand Wars from the 1840s to 1870s; family burial grounds and cemeteries, which reflect the isolation of many communities in the nineteenth century; and finally the many lone graves which are sprinkled over remote areas of the country. The rich and varied material culture contained in these burial places includes graves, headstones of many styles and materials, inscriptions which hold a wealth of information, fences and enclosures, and historic plantings, both native and introduced. These burial places and the artefacts they contain are significant for their reflection of New Zealand history, of events significant and minor, and of the tastes, beliefs and attitudes of nineteenth century New Zealanders. The next chapter will assess how this valuable asset is regarded by New Zealanders in the twenty-first century.
Chapter Six

What is it good for? Absolutely nothing?
Making Sense of the Nineteenth Century Cemetery in the Twenty-First Century

The nineteenth century Jewish graves and headstones which Odeda Rosenthal found near the mulberry tree in Nelson’s Wakapuaka Cemetery were an essential source in her research on international Jewry. Grave monuments, erected by grieving relatives, are often the only memorial to these people and their lives. This is true not only for Jews, but for most nineteenth century inhabitants of New Zealand. While some may have left published or unpublished accounts, diaries, photographs, objects from their daily lives which have become treasured family possessions or museum pieces, or even memorials, houses and buildings, the cemetery monument remains one of the most common records of nineteenth century New Zealanders, and their lives, beliefs, pursuits and tastes. At the same time, the cemetery is the most neglected of these sources in historical research in New Zealand. Archaeologists and anthropologists regularly study prehistoric Maori burials to gain deeper insight into Maori culture, society, life and death. Nineteenth century urupa, burial grounds, churchyards and cemeteries, by contrast, remain largely untapped mines of information, even though excavation is unnecessary. The main reason for this is that a variety of written and visual sources are available for the period after European contact. These sources, and not the material culture created and used by nineteenth century Maori and Pakeha, have traditionally supplied the historian with insight into nineteenth century life in nineteenth century New Zealand.

This chapter argues that the rich and varied material culture of New Zealand’s nineteenth century cemeteries is a valuable resource in historical research, which has the potential to enhance our understanding of colonial and indigenous culture and society, particularly when combined with written and visual sources. The first part of the chapter analyses the status and use of the nineteenth century cemetery in twenty-

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1 The most notable exception is the use of the cemetery in family research, which has long been recognised. The New Zealand Society of Genealogists have transcribed the headstone inscriptions of a vast number of New Zealand’s nineteenth century cemeteries.
first century New Zealand through the examination of three perspectives. The first of these are cultural perspectives, which reveal how contemporary New Zealanders regard their nineteenth century burial places. Attitudes toward the historic cemetery are characterised by neglect, but increasing interest, among Pakeha. A contrasting reverence for historic burial places is characteristic of Maori. I also examine the perspectives of external agencies, such as the NZHPT. These are closely connected to cultural perspectives, being the collective cultural expression of what is considered valuable. A discussion on how the cemetery is regarded in disciplinary perspectives follows. The second part of the chapter examines the value of the material culture of the cemetery as a research source, and what types of information the cemetery can yield. In these ways I hope to make sense of the material culture discussed in the previous chapter: how it can be used and interpreted, and what value it has today. The last part of the chapter discusses preservation issues and suggests possible strategies for enhancing cemetery conservation.

The attitudes and perspectives of New Zealanders toward our nineteenth century burial places are curiously ambivalent. Some people find them fascinating places, full of irreplaceable information and art, providing important links to ancestors and the past. Others regard them as morbid places, or even a waste of space. Thousands of graves in hundreds of cemeteries throughout New Zealand lie neglected and forgotten. Their forlorn state is telling of the regard many New Zealanders have for the burial places of their ancestors, and for historic cemeteries in general. This state of affairs is changing slowly, as New Zealanders participate in the search for both individual and national identity, reflected by the increasing interest in genealogy and New Zealand history. In Australia Lionel Gilbert has observed, however, that “We constantly laud the noble lives, characters, and achievements of our ‘wonderful pioneers’ while we destroy the monuments recording their worth”. The same situation exists in New Zealand. In 1999 the Otago Daily Times noted that “Some citizens say a city which celebrates its heritage and boasts the calibre of its early settlers should take better care of their burial sites.” While $100,000 was spent on

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2 Some historic cemeteries are well cared for, particularly those which still function as such. Others are neglected and vandalised, and nearly all rely on the interest of local communities and individuals.
3 Gilbert, 9.
fireworks for Otago’s sesquicentennial in 1998, the people being celebrated lay in neglected graves.

The ambivalent attitudes toward cemeteries are partly the result of different cultural perspectives regarding death and burial places. Pakeha, Eric Pawson argues: prefer to forget death, unless there is a social message to impart. The prominent siting of Maori cemeteries, and the care lavished upon them ... is the antithesis of the European way: to Europeans the ordinary dead are not productive and, like other unproductive features, are banished to peripheral places.\(^5\)

Pakeha burial grounds often suffer from neglect, while the importance of whakapapa and ancestors in contemporary Maori culture means urupa are usually well maintained. Whakapapa, which can be understood as both genealogy, and an attempt to impose a relationship between an iwi and the natural world, is “a metaphysical framework constructed to place oneself within the world.”\(^6\) Urupa, cemeteries and burial places are of great importance, and some Maori travel long distances from time to time, to visit urupa, especially if ancestors are known to be buried there.\(^7\) The great importance of whakapapa and genealogy in Maori society, and in forming Maori identity, results in better acknowledgement and care of burial places, which are regarded as taonga and places to be treasured.

The destruction of a large part of Wellington’s Bolton Street Cemetery, cut up by the urban motorway in the 1970s and turned into a public park, demonstrates that many Europeans do not consider cemeteries sacred sites.\(^8\) Margaret Alington noted in relation to the Bolton Street Memorial Park that “For the Maori it will remain a burial ground and a sacred place [while] Pakeha city workers eat their lunches beside the graves and walk the paths.”\(^9\) The discrepancy in attitudes in contemporary society toward historic Maori and Pakeha burials is also well illustrated by the Mount Street

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\(^7\) Email from Jim Williams to Stephen Deed, 4 November 2003.

\(^8\) Pawson, 27.

Cemetery fracas. The Chairman of Friends of Mount Street Inc. believed that the discovery of a letter detailing the burial of a Maori woman in the cemetery in the 1860s brought "a whole new cultural perspective into the issue", and meant "that now the university needs to be very careful about how it handles the issue." Although the discovery did indeed add an extra cultural dimension to the significance of the cemetery, the implication is that previously the University did not regard European burials as sacred or culturally significant. One Wellington citizen noted in 1992 "the latest development in the Mount Street Cemetery saga is an attempt to confirm the presence of Maori burials and thereby presumably bestow an air of sacredness that does not seem to be attached to non-Maori burials."  

Pakeha tend to regard the maintenance of burial places as the responsibility of local bodies. Maori see maintenance and protection of graves as a family duty. Councils, although responsible for the general upkeep of the cemetery, are not required to maintain individual monuments and plots, which were sold privately to families in perpetuity. Heather Bray of the Dunedin Genealogical Society says people cannot be expected to maintain the graves of ancestors buried generations ago. In other countries this problem has been overcome by accepting the fact that cemetery conservation is a community responsibility.  

The material culture and landscape of the cemetery is a valuable link with our past, both collective and personal. It is largely in this way that the nineteenth century cemetery is coming to be recognised as an important component of the cultural landscape by Pakeha. As issues such as identity and heritage assume greater

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10 When the Catholic Church considered selling part of the already diminished nineteenth century Catholic Cemetery in Mount Street to Victoria University for redevelopment in the early 1990s. Having learnt from the Bolton Street disaster, its plans met with much successful opposition.  
11 Friends of Mount Street Inc., "Application to the Minister For The Environment for Status as a Heritage Protection Authority Under the Resource Management Act 1991" (Wellington, October 1993), 197.  
12 Letter to the Editor, 28/11/92, ibid., 198.  
13 The fact that plots are technically private property presents an obstacle to cemetery conservation and or restoration. In 1999 a Carterton resident and her husband sought permission from the Carterton District Council to restore Clareville cemetery. The couple were required to trace descendants and ask permission first, an almost impossible task which frustrated their efforts to remedy the deterioration of the historic cemeteries. "Fight for settler heritage" (Tanya Katters), in The Dominion Post, Friday 27 June 2003, p.A7.  
importance in Pakeha culture, the cemetery is becoming appreciated instead of
ignored. The opposition which the plans to sell part of the Mount Street Cemetery
aroused underlines the growing importance of nineteenth century European burials to
Pakeha. The Chairman of Friends of Mount Street Inc. observed that “By far the
biggest proportion of our membership is from descendant families of those buried in
the Cemetery. This reflects the strong emotional ties these people have with the
Cemetery.”16 In Wainuiomata, the 1860s church and its burial ground are an
important part of local identity, supplying “a link between the early settlers of the
Valley and the present day population.”17

The attitudes of external agencies, which includes bodies such as the NZHPT, the
Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand (HCCTNZ) and city
councils, toward historic cemeteries are a reflection of the cultural perspectives
examined above. The policies of these external agencies regarding the protection and
management of nineteenth century cemeteries is an indication of how they are valued
at local, regional and national levels. Indicative of neglect is the lack of policy
regarding cemeteries from the country’s leading heritage protection agency, the
NZHPT. The NZHPT has developed no policy in either the registration of important
cemeteries or representative cemetery types, or in conserving the cemetery, which is a
specialised area. A section on cemeteries was included in the December 1991
consolidation of Trust policy. As this predates the Historic Places Act (1993),
however, it is regarded as out of date.18 There are very few burial places protected by
a NZHPT category I or II status. Only one cemetery is included on the Trust’s online
register and three individually listed monuments.19 Currently, nineteenth century
cemeteries receive a basic blanket protection as archaeological sites. According to the
Historic Places Act (1993) any site containing evidence of human activity prior to
1900 is classed as an archaeological site. This requires that any work which may

16 Friends of Mount Street Inc., Application to the Minister For The Environment for Status as a
Heritage Protection Authority Under the Resource Management Act 1991, Wellington, October 1993,
5.
17 Vicky Alexander, The History of Wainuiomata’s Coast Road Church and Cemetery, Wainuiomata
18 Aidan Challis, Email to Elaine Marland, 16 June 2003. Emailed to Stephen Deed by Elizabeth Kerr.
Places, Historic Areas, Wahi Tapu and Wahi Tapu Areas 20 April 2004. These are the Massey
Memorial and the Truby King Mausoleum in Wellington, and Larnach’s Tomb in Dunedin. These
protect architect-designed monuments of eminent people, rather than the everyday landscapes of the
ordinary dead. The cemetery is Saint Paul’s churchyard in Paihia.
modify, damage or destroy the cemetery/site needs authorisation. Damaged monuments, however, are often cleared away, or rearranged, by usually well-meaning individuals. Historic plantings are sometimes removed, although they form as integral a part of the cemetery landscape as the monuments. One major shortcoming of this form of protection is that it only covers cemeteries and monuments dating from before 1900. This excludes many significant cemeteries and individual memorials. In Texas, USA, a historic cemetery is recognised as an important site in its own right. Furthermore, the Texan definition of historic includes cemeteries containing graves at least fifty years old, which allows the constant inclusion of more recent monuments as time progresses.20

Legislation, other than the Historic Places Act (1993), offers some limited protection for New Zealand's nineteenth century cemeteries. The Resource Management Act (1991) is designed to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources, and to sustain the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations. Our nineteenth century cemeteries are a valuable physical resource. Section 7 (Other Matters) is relevant in its encouragement for (c) The maintenance and enhancement of amenity values, (d) Intrinsic values of ecosystems, and (e) Recognition and protection of the heritage values of sites, buildings, places or areas. The principal instrument which councils use to carry out their responsibilities under the Resource Management Act is the District Plan.21 Particular cemeteries and individual monuments are given some form of protection and status through their inclusion as heritage structures in city council district plans. Many nineteenth century cemeteries were vested in city councils upon their closure in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. The status of many of these historic cemeteries is as reserves under the Reserves Act (1977), such as Dunedin's two great nineteenth century cemeteries. Although this ensures the continuance of general maintenance, such as lawn mowing, it does not address the special needs of cemetery conservation. Likewise, while the Burial and Cremation Act (1964), Section 43(2), declares that "a closed cemetery shall not be sold or leased or otherwise disposed or diverted to any other purpose"22, it does not require the conservation of monuments or trees.

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21 LA4 Landscape Architects and Planners, 7.
22 Ibid.
Although they exercise no authority over the conservation and control of nineteenth century burial places, two other external agencies, the Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand (HCCTNZ) and the New Zealand Society of Genealogists (NZSG) reflect the growing appreciation of historic cemeteries in this country. Genealogists have long recognised the value of the cemetery in historical research, and have compiled headstone transcripts of hundreds of cemeteries throughout New Zealand. This interest in our personal past and origins complements the increasing desire to save, understand and interpret our built heritage. The HCCTNZ was established in 2001 in response to the realisation that an increasing number of New Zealand’s cemeteries are in danger of deteriorating. The formation of the Trust is indicative of changing attitudes in New Zealand towards our historic cemeteries, and highlights the need to address the ways in which we perceive and consequently treat them.

Academic perspectives on the value of the nineteenth century, although rare in New Zealand because of the neglect of the cemetery as a research tool, are often more positive than cultural or external agency perspectives. Eric Pawson notes that while cemeteries are not sacred sites for Pakeha, they can be useful study sites.23 In his 1991 article in the New Zealand Journal of Geography, Pawson argues:

Monuments, memorials and cemeteries are important landscape components because they can reveal much about cultural attitudes in the past. They transmit symbolic [and literal] statements about cultural identity, behaviour, attitudes to race and gender and, of course, death.24

Pawson recognised that the nineteenth century New Zealand cemetery has the potential to shed light on many different aspects of life and death. This potential has been lightly explored by several university theses and reports, which have used the material culture of the cemetery, including headstone style and inscription, and sectarian divisions, to assess the role and impact of ideology, religion and gender in nineteenth and early twentieth century New Zealand.25

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23 Pawson, 27.
24 Ibid., 26.
Despite these demonstrations of the value of the cemetery in academic research, in the thirteen years since Pawson noted the usefulness of the cemetery as a study site, the cemetery has remained a neglected research tool, the preserve of genealogists and researchers of local history. Despite the wide range and large number of memorials and monuments in the New Zealand landscape, including those in cemeteries, historians, notes Pawson, "have rarely taken them seriously".  

Traditionally, the use of material culture has been restricted to the disciplines of anthropology and archaeology, and more recently, cultural geography and landscape studies. Those studies which have used the material culture of the New Zealand cemetery as a major source have been conducted within the confines of anthropology departments. New Zealand historians, due to their traditional reliance on textual evidence, have largely ignored the use of material culture. In *The Sorrow and the Pride*, Chris Maclean and Jock Phillips demonstrated the value of material culture as a research tool in New Zealand history. Maclean and Phillips examined the cultural attitudes of nineteenth and early twentieth century New Zealanders revealed by the war memorials which we take for granted as part of the landscapes we inhabit.

When the cemetery is used as a source, or is studied in its own right, it is generally interpreted in terms of material culture studies. The basic assumption of those studying material culture is that the manufacture or modification of objects reflects the beliefs, needs and attitudes of the individuals or groups who made and used them.  

This is the common thread which binds academic perspectives. Pearson argues that material culture can, therefore, "be seen as a form of non-verbal communication through the representation of ideas."  

Of course, in the cemetery, there is also 'verbal' communication through inscriptions and epitaphs. Although the methods used by historians and material culture students do differ, their identical aims of understanding more about past people and ways of life means that they are very
complementary. Material culture is not a more valuable source than the written record, and can only reach its full potential when used in conjunction with textual evidence. In some cases material culture challenges the authority of the written word. This was the case in the Withells Road Cemetery, in Canterbury, where the information yielded by the archaeological excavation of the nineteenth century burial ground was found to be more accurate than the written historical record.

Geographer Pierce Lewis has called the man-made landscape a “cultural autobiography”. Objects in the landscape are “the primary evidence created by people who often left behind no written records of their day to day activities.” Material records become even more valuable in the absence or scarcity of written sources pertaining to particular a period, event, idea or people. The use of material records, such as the cemetery, argues Meyer “can enrich our cultural understanding of historic groups for whom so little remains in written form.” The material culture of the nineteenth century New Zealand cemetery or burial ground can also provide information on early periods of settlement for which written records are scarce. This has been recognised in Australia, where Lowe and Mackay argue that:

As an archaeological resource Old Sydney Burial Ground has high scientific research potential as it contains material culture related to seminal phase of the nation's history. Analysis of the fabric of the site is likely to provide evidence of social customs, lifeways, construction technologies and other aspects of early settlement, which is unavailable from other sites and resources.

Material objects, the cemetery in particular, also satisfy the need for historical immediacy, and have the power to transport our minds to another time. As Margaret Alington notes:

There may be no one living now who grieves over the loss within two months of five Sutherland children, but the fact that they died from diphtheria speaks to us in a different way, and for the time being carries us into the hazards of their world.

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29 Trotter and McCulloch.
31 Lewis, 116.
32 Meyer, 163.
34 Margaret Alington, Unquiet Earth, 257.
The cemetery is particularly valuable as a source because of contextual, spatial and temporal controls. These boundaries mean that the cemetery provides what Edwin Dethlefsen calls “a restricted, tangible and controllable body of data.” Few features of the cultural landscape are as enduring as the cemetery, which has generally avoided the modifications which have greatly altered the landscape of the living. This is partly due to the perception of the cemetery as “sacred or semi-sacred land”, or a space best left alone. Although some have disappeared from New Zealand’s landscape through neglect and destruction and others have been modified, the cemetery has, in general, proved resistant to change. For Jeane, “the occurrence of relatively unchanged burial grounds can provide a window into the recent past and, thus, one avenue for reconstructing historical landscapes.” The static nature of cemeteries means that objects have been preserved in situ, in their physical context. When using material culture in historical or other research, context, both physical and historical, is of the utmost importance. “Context,” Ian Brown observes, “is indeed the key to understanding what material culture can tell us about historical processes,” and in any study of objects in a cultural landscape it is vital that “things are where things were with respect to one another.” Without context the contribution of material culture to understanding history is often minimal. Although objects can tell us much about past societies, their potential is not always realised. “Part of the problem”, argues Brown:

is that the objects that so often come under study are in museums, divorced from the social and cultural environment responsible for their existence. Cultural landscapes provide a much better arena for appreciating the value of material culture studies because much of the environment is still in place.

The cemetery is one of these cultural landscapes. The tendency of the cemetery to resist or avoid change means that the spatial relationships between artefacts has been

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36 Hannon, 237.
37 Jeane, 107.
38 Ian W. Brown, 144.
39 Ibid., 156-157.
40 Ian W. Brown, 140. Definition of *cultural landscape* given by Lewis: “geographers mean the total assemblage of visible things that human beings have done to alter the face of the earth”, Lewis, 115.
maintained. The artefacts contained in the cemetery are also often dated, unlike many other items of material culture. Although one must be careful to avoid uncritical acceptance of headstone date and placement, the cemetery landscape is subject to many more contextual controls than most other cultural landscapes.

This does not mean there are no problems which may arise when using the material culture of the cemetery as a research tool. Aubrey Cannon notes "that there are major if not insurmountable problems involved in demographic reconstruction from monument data". The main one of these is the tendency for monument data, in many countries and periods, to over-represent males and the elderly and under-represent females and subadults. There is also a bias toward greater representation of higher status groups and individuals. Jacqui Craig's study of gender bias in Dunedin's Northern Cemetery concluded that a greater number of words were used to describe deceased males than females and that the majority of adult women were described in terms of their relation to a husband. Also, New Zealand's nineteenth century cemeteries only represent those who could afford, or had access to, permanent stone markers. While this last fact diminishes the value of the cemetery in demographic studies of New Zealand's population in the years before widespread access to stone grave markers, the cemetery still has great value for both qualitative and quantitative study. It is vital to recognise the biases and weaknesses of the material record, as a historian does, or should, with the written record.

It is also important to remain wary of the subjectivity of the material record, and the way in which we interpret it. While we may be hearing the 'voices' of the culture or people which created the artefact, we are also hearing our own. In addition, the material record is not always objective. This applies particularly to the cemetery, which provided a context in colonial New Zealand for the expression of conformity.

41 Dethlefsen, 138.
42 Ian W. Brown, 145.
44 Edgar, 10.
45 Poor people, or paupers, obviously could not afford headstones, and are apparently absent from the cemetery landscape. The use of cemetery records, if they still exist, can overcome this problem. Early cemeteries and burial grounds also featured many wooden headstones or grave enclosures, which have rotted or been removed. This means that the material record of the cemetery for the early part of New Zealand's settlement is more scanty than for later decades when stone became widely accessible.
and respectability. The erection and inscription of headstones was part of the very conscious and planned ritual of burial. Recognising, however, that the material record, like the written record, is not always objective, and that we bring our own experiences and understanding to bear on how we interpret it, overcomes what weaknesses the cemetery may have as a source. How we portray ourselves in stone, and the codes of behaviour to which we adhere, can be much more insightful than mere dates of death.

What types of information does the cemetery yield through the study of its material culture? There are three broad categories of information recoverable from cemetery and churchyard monuments Rodwell argues. These are, first:

the genealogical, demographic and historical data contained in the inscription; secondly, the art historical and iconographical evidence provided by the design and decoration of the monument as a whole; thirdly, the ‘hidden’ archaeological and medical data, which are so often overlooked. 46

At first sight, it may seem that genealogical data is the only information contained in the cemetery. Although it may be the most visible and easily ‘read’, the material culture of the cemetery contains a great deal of under-utilised information on and insight into many other aspects of culture and society, both quantitative and qualitative. The genealogical data inscribed on headstones have long been seen as the main, and most valuable, source of information contained in the cemetery. Individual and groups of genealogists have long been interested in transcribing the names, dates of birth and death, and family relationships recorded on nineteenth century headstones. Personal information such as political affiliation, lodge memberships or profession may also be mentioned. Headstones record the lives and deeds of notable people, whose importance in the community may have been translated into a grand monument. Just as importantly, the material culture of the cemetery is a record of the lives of more ordinary folk and records both the stories of high achievement and of failure. 47

Cemeteries not only record the lives of individuals and families, but also chronicle the history and development of communities, regions, and of the nation. As

46 Rodwell, 164.
47 Griffin and Tobin, 54.
a reflection of the societies that create them, cemeteries are places which provide us with insight into the social and economic structure, religious tenets and ethnic composition of the community, and reveal features such as the ethnic and religious tessellation in Pakeha colonial society. From the material culture of the New Zealand cemetery we are also able to gauge attitudes toward gender and race. The presence of class, status differentiation and wealth can be inferred through plot and monument size and detail. The structure of society, and the importance of the units of the individual and family, whanau and iwi, can also be examined.

The information contained in the cemetery can be applied to various scales of historical research: from a study of an individual or family, town or district, a city or region, or the nation. Cemeteries, Hannon argues are particularly valuable in regional studies, as they "provide intact significant portions of the cultural-historical record needed by the researcher who is attempting to get at the roots of the characteristics of a region". Within the cemetery, argues Hannon, "one can observe a preserved microcosmic representation of a region's history and characteristics ... and gain important insights from which specific information and informed inferences can be drawn." The landscape of the cemetery also reveals changes and continuity of community, regional and national characteristics over time. In America, Hannon argues "As regions or smaller geographic units move through periods of cultural transition, the nature of these changes can often be read in the changing faces of their cemeteries and the artifacts they contain." This is also the case in New Zealand, where the cemetery presents a material record of the demographic, social and economic transitions through which regions have passed. The cemeteries of the Otago and West Coast goldfields, for example, reveal a transition from male-dominated populations, the presence of ethno-religious concentrations, such as Jews and Chinese, and a reliance on goldmining in the nineteenth century, to a more balanced population and varied economy in the twentieth century. Hannon's studies were based on American cemeteries, which explains his favouring regional studies. In New Zealand, with its smaller landmass, shorter period of settlement and more homogeneous population, the information gained from the material culture of the

48 Jeane, 107.
49 Ibid., 237.
50 Hannon, 256.
51 Ibid., 256.
cemetery has greater national applicability, and the cemetery can reveal nation-wide transitions.\(^{52}\)

The cemetery is a useful place for gaining information on important nineteenth century events in New Zealand, although this is limited to those events which resulted in high numbers of dead. These include interracial conflicts, such as the Land Wars of the 1860s, the gold rushes of the same decade, shipwrecks, mining accidents, natural disasters, and epidemics. Pawson gives the examples of the influenza epidemic of 1918, or the 1929 earthquake which is commemorated in the Murchison Cemetery, south of Nelson. In this case the graves commemorating lives lost are one of the few local reminders of the most intense earthquakes experienced since European colonisation.\(^{53}\) The material culture of the cemetery allows us insight into the impact these events had on the communities in which they took place and how these communities dealt with the trauma.

The cemetery can also offer equally valuable insight into a multitude of less ‘eventful’ aspects of life in nineteenth century New Zealand. These include issues of town planning, including the provision of green and leisure spaces, the status of various professions and employments, hardships and isolation, the dangers of fire in our wooden towns, the availability of medical services, and systems of government. The cemetery records for each district the human story of its past inhabitants. In the cemetery it is possible to trace the successive patterns of migration and settlement.\(^{54}\) Maori burial grounds can also demonstrate many of the changes and transitions experienced in Maori society in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, including the widespread adoption and adaptation of Christianity.

As well as throwing light on various aspects of life and society in nineteenth and early twentieth century New Zealand, the material culture of the cemetery also reveals causes of and cultural attitudes toward death. The tombstone has great value for medical history and epidemiological study, recording the impact of diseases in the

\(^{52}\) For example, Glyn Hurley, “Symbols from the Cemetery: the archaeology of a faith in decline”, MA Thesis, University of Auckland, 1997, examines the decline of Christianity on a national scale using various cemetery examples.

\(^{53}\) Pawson, 27.

\(^{54}\) Griffin and Tobin, 54.
nineteenth century which today give no cause for concern. The cemetery records the prevalence of these diseases, of epidemics which carried off whole families, and of drowning, the ‘New Zealand death’. Accidental deaths which occurred in surveying and exploring the new country, or in mining and fires are also recorded. Some cemeteries record the deaths of murder victims, and those who fell in the conflicts of the 1860s, and reflect the sometimes violent nature of colonial society. High levels of infant mortality, and the low life expectancy of colonial New Zealanders are also recorded.

Knowledge of nineteenth century attitudes toward death, and the dead, can be gained from an examination of the material culture of the cemetery. The epitaph and symbolism incorporated into the monument design “reveal contemporary views and attitudes regarding the nature of the death experience, often in terms of those who survive the loss.” New Zealand’s nineteenth century cemeteries are rich in symbolism, both Christian and pagan in origin. These include broken columns, symbolising a life cut short, clasped hands which reflect love and friendship, angels, Roman cremation urns of remembrance, often covered by shrouds representing the Shroud of Christ, and torches. If lit these symbolise immortality, if snuffed they represent death. The sense of loss and was also often expressed through an epitaph. Typical were short Biblical quotes such as ‘Thy will be done’, or the sentimental line ‘Only Sleeping’. Such words and symbols enable the historian to understand how the Victorian cult of memory and concern for the immortality of the body was incorporated into a Christian framework, which preached the immortality of the soul. These symbols and epitaphs also reflect what was considered an acceptable expression of grief in Victorian New Zealand, and what were the acceptable implications of life and death.

Attitudes toward the dead can also be read in the topography and material culture of the cemetery. The relationship between the dead and the living, and how this has changed over time, “can be explored” argues Parker Pearson, “through their

55 In an early example of interest in cemetery preservation, Dr (later Sir Charles) Hercus of the Medical School at Otago University asked that efforts be made to safeguard those stones that recorded the large number of children wiped out in epidemics. Alington, *Unquiet Earth*, 124.
56 Edgette in Meyer, 89.
57 Dethlefsen, 137.
spatial and topographic separation and the extent to which the dead occupy the sacred and secular places within the landscape. The close proximity of burial grounds to early settlements, and their gradual removal to more distant locations in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries speaks of a declining value for the dead. Pearson argues that “the micro-topographic and landscape setting of the places of the dead may provide further insights into the ways in which the dead were incorporated into cosmologies and social practices. We can discover how barriers (physical and symbolic) are placed to protect the living from the dead”. The placement of the dead in secret caves by Maori, and the enforcement of tapu was one way in which the living attempted to protect themselves from the dead, while at the same time incorporating them into Maori cosmology. The material culture which is used to set the dead apart from or to bind them to the living can also be examined. The use of the headstone, for example, bound the viewer to the deceased with its message from the grave.

The architecture of the cemetery is perhaps the most commonly valued feature of the cemetery, at least for Pakeha, because of its easily appreciated aesthetic value. As well as being attractive, the monuments and surrounds which survive in the cemetery today can inform the researcher of aspects of taste, technology and business. The style of the monument and its surround not only reveal what was considered appropriate mortuary architecture, but often reflects colonial taste and fashion in general. Many elements are echoed in domestic architecture, from gothic and classical features, to useful picket fences and decorative cast-iron surrounds. The materials in which headstones and surrounds were worked can shed light on past technologies and methods no longer widely practised, such as stone working and cast iron manufacture. Many stone masons signed their works, which were their greatest advertisement. These are now valuable records for those researching monumental masons, and other businesses or industries such as iron foundries and undertakers, transportation and quarrying. The architectural styles in monument and cemetery design reveal the impact of international influences, colonial relationships and an international flow of ideas relating to cemetery design. The emulation of British

59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
practices, and the importation of Australian stones and plans demonstrates how nineteenth century New Zealanders borrowed and adapted ideas and materials.

The material culture of the cemetery can also offer insight into social relationships not evident in the written record, apart from the relative values of kin. While biological relationships are easily constructed from the historical record, the more subtle emotional relationships (love, hate, friendship, respect, and so forth) are for the most part lacking in the history of a general population. Evidence of these can sometimes be found in the cemetery. Ian Brown argues "it is reasonable to presume that the location of graves in a cemetery reflects to some degree the social relationships of the deceased." Although information of this kind may appear "trite" in the greater scheme of things, such knowledge of the relationships within families, and between friends and enemies, might help explain why certain events happened that did indeed influence the course of history.

The nineteenth century New Zealand cemetery is, therefore, a useful source for a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, archaeology, history, architecture, and geography. Within the landscape of the cemetery is contained a vast amount of information. When combined with written sources, the material record preserved in the cemetery has the potential to shed light on many aspects of life and death in colonial New Zealand. It is history, which makes the least use of it, which stands to gain the most.

The information contained in the material culture of the nineteenth century New Zealand cemetery is in danger of being lost because of the neglect engendered by the negative cultural, external agency and disciplinary perspectives examined at the beginning of the chapter. On the mourning card distributed by the grieving family

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61 Dethlefsen, 137.
62 Ian W. Brown, 146.
63 Ibid. Brown's case study was based on the graves of a single family in a New England cemetery. All members of the family who had died in the late eighteenth century had been buried near one another, except one woman who had died of an infectious disease. It was presumed the isolated position of her grave represented fear of the disease. Further investigation revealed that her position in the cemetery landscape reflected the family's dislike of the woman.
64 Ibid.
of William Fraser, who died in October 1878, aged thirty-two, were embossed the words:

What is life? It is even as a vapour that appeareth
for a little time, and then vanisheth away.\textsuperscript{65}

William Fraser’s headstone was intended to overcome this transience with its permanence. A century on, however, and the memorials erected to the memory of nineteenth century New Zealanders are also in danger of vanishing through decay, neglect and vandalism. Preservation has not been characteristic of the history of New Zealand’s burial places. One of the main losses occurred in the late 1960s, when 3.7 acres of the historic Bolton Street Cemetery in Wellington were taken for an urban motorway.\textsuperscript{66} 3,693 bodies were disinterred and hundreds of monuments shifted, and the mortuary chapel destroyed. New Zealanders have been lucky in the fact that many of our nineteenth century cemeteries have continued in use up to the present day. This means we have not suffered the same losses as Australia and Britain, and still retain a rich, if endangered, cemetery heritage.

Whose responsibility is it to protect the cemetery from decay and vandalism?\textsuperscript{67} Officially, the maintenance of each plot and the monuments erected on it is regarded as the responsibility of the family and descendants of the deceased. It is evident that this system does not work. The HCCTNZ aims to change the perception of the cemetery as a collection of privately owned plots, to a more collective cultural perspective, encouraging “communities throughout New Zealand to recognise that their cemeteries are important cultural and historical symbols and resources.”\textsuperscript{68} It is vital to the future of the historic cemetery to improve community appreciation of its heritage and research value as this will help in an area where the historic cemetery is most wanting: funding. Many of our historic cemeteries are managed by local government authorities and funded through rate revenue. In Australia Chris Johnston

\textsuperscript{65} Mr. I. A. Williamson: Begg Family Papers, Misc-MS-0949/002. Hocken Library, University of Otago. This is printed on a white card embossed with the image of an altar tomb topped with an urn (labelled “RESURGUM”), a flaming torch, and a burial shroud. Ivy trails along the bottom: it is rich in imagery and symbolism.


\textsuperscript{67} This relates to those cemeteries located on Crown or other publicly-owned land. Those on private land are the responsibility of the owners, and are often well-maintained in any case. Similarly, Maori cemeteries and burial places are usually highly maintained and free from vandalism.

has noted that this system is "well-suited to the management of the cemetery regarded as part of the heritage of a local community as those who are benefiting are paying the costs."\(^{69}\)

It is important that cemetery conservation, in addition to the recording of information from cemetery monuments, be actively promoted by civic organisations and historical societies in order to preserve for posterity the cultural information which is found there. Transcribable genealogical dates and details are not, as we have seen, the only information contained in the cemetery. Much of the value of the cemetery as a research tool lies in the potential of its material culture, individually and as a whole landscape, to communicate ideas, beliefs and the impact of events. This is not always contained in words which can simply be copied onto paper. It is dangerous to consider a cemetery as 'recorded' when only names and dates have been recorded by genealogists. Inscriptions are only part, albeit a very important one, of the cemetery. There are also other reasons for promoting the conservation of the physical. As Alington notes:

> It may be argued that photographs and transcriptions can adequately record the stones. But to experience them in their setting, to respond to the particular sort of stone, the lettering, the proportion, the enclosure – all these lead to a total experience that is comparable with entering a well-maintained old building.\(^{70}\)

Conserving representative samples of the different cemetery types found in this country should be an essential aspect of cemetery preservation. They are important features of our historical landscape and national heritage, and their preservation will provide cultural benefit to the living and "due deference to the dead."\(^{71}\)

There are several issues which complicate the aim of conserving our nineteenth century burial places. One of these is historic trees versus historic headstones. Which should take precedence? Another is decay versus preservation. The argument over whether to restore, conserve or allow decay has become dominant

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\(^{69}\) Chris Johnston, "Conserving Cemeteries," in Sagazio, 144.
\(^{70}\) Alington, *Unquiet Earth*, 258.
\(^{71}\) Gilbert, 11.
in cemetery conservation. In England, the vast size, lack of funds\(^\text{72}\) and attractive atmosphere created by overgrowth of London's Highgate Cemetery led to the decision to allow decay. The fact that New Zealand's nineteenth century cemeteries are smaller in size and generally publicly-owned means that conservation, and in some cases restoration, is a more viable option. The aim of the HCCTNZ is to halt the deterioration of our historic burial grounds. For some, however, the decay found in our older cemeteries is one of its most attractive properties. Also, it is impossible to preserve all, or anything forever. Hannon notes that "cultural landscapes of all types are by nature transitory".\(^\text{73}\) Although intended to be permanent, this includes the landscape of the cemetery.

Without the resources to preserve every cemetery monument it is important that three steps be taken.\(^\text{74}\) The first is the compilation of a schedule of historic cemeteries. This would be relatively easy to create, although it would be more difficult to include all private burial places and Maori urupa, as some iwi and hapu prefer to restrict knowledge of the location of important wahi tapu to ensure their protection. This list would be constructed thematically to ensure that representative samples of the different types of cemetery I have identified were preserved.

The second step, and perhaps the most costly, would involve the creation of conservation plans for the representative individual cemeteries. James Semple Kerr argues that the "major act of interpretation for any place is the preparation of a conservation plan."\(^\text{75}\) Although essential, such plans require money and expertise. It is perhaps possible to use a template which could be adjusted to each cemetery, although it is important that each conservation plan addresses the particular needs of that cemetery. Although common in the conservation of historic buildings, at the moment there exist only two cemetery conservation plans in New Zealand. These were made in the 1990s for the Mount Street Catholic Cemetery in Wellington, and Auckland's Symonds Street Cemetery. The Mount Street Cemetery conservation plan

\(^{72}\) Highgate was one of the private joint stock cemeteries created in London in the 1830s. Because the income of the company came from burial fees, when the cemetery was full the cemetery could no longer be so well maintained.

\(^{73}\) Hannon, 256.

\(^{74}\) The NZHPT, the HCCTNZ or local councils could undertake this.

recommended that the “future conservation and development of the place should be carried out in accordance with the *ICOMOS New Zealand Charter* for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value.” In the *ICOMOS New Zealand Charter (1993)* a place cultural heritage value is defined as a place “possessing historical, archaeological, architectural, technological, aesthetic, scientific, spiritual, social, traditional, or other special cultural significance, associated with human activity.” New Zealand’s historic cemeteries clearly possess these qualities, and are places of great cultural significance. Basing conservation plans on the guidelines set out by ICOMOS follows practice in Australia. The Burra Charter, which is the ICOMOS Australian Charter, defines a number of ‘values’ which may contribute to the heritage significance of a place. All cemeteries have social and historic values, and most have a greater or lesser degree of architectural, aesthetic and scientific values. The National Trust in Australia has adopted the heritage values outlined in the Burra Charter and the Australian Natural Heritage Charter and applied them directly to cemeteries.

The third step would entail the recognition of vulnerable cemeteries and materials. Vulnerable cemeteries may include those threatened by development, vandalism or extreme neglect. It is important to identify ‘at-risk’ cemeteries to prevent their loss. The components of the cemetery landscape are constructed from various materials, some of which are more prone to decay than others. Materials liable to decay include wood, limestone, sandstone and cast iron. Monuments made of slate, granite and marble are at little risk of decay and require minimal maintenance. The most vulnerable components of each cemetery need to be identified and efforts made to prevent their destruction. Because well meaning volunteer ‘tidy-ups’ and working bees have the potential to be as destructive to historic fabric as outright vandalism, it is also essential that a conservation guidelines handbook for New Zealand cemeteries be made available. The HCCTNZ has addressed this need to some degree with the publication of two informative

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79 Ibid.
pamphlets, which outline the basic values of the cemetery and how to conserve its material culture.

The nineteenth century cemetery is not yet widely accepted as a valuable component of our cultural and historic landscape. Its material culture, which has the potential to yield a great deal of information on a variety of subjects, is in danger of deterioration. Part of this is due to cultural perspectives toward the cemetery. Pakeha tend not to regard the cemetery as a sacred site, and treat the maintenance of the cemetery as a council concern. This negative perspective is reflected in the perspectives of external agencies, which afford the cemetery scant protection. The formation of the HCCTNZ, with its aims to promote and protect the historic cemetery, reflects a growing appreciation for the cemetery. Although academic perspectives are generally positive in regarding the cemetery as a valuable source of information, it remains a neglected research tool, particularly in history. Cemeteries have generally been resistant to the forces which have altered other parts of the built environment, making them a valuable material record. Used in combination with traditional written sources the material culture of the cemetery, including headstones, epitaphs, surrounds, paths and plantings, have the power to communicate much about the ways in which our ancestors lived and died. Much of this information is in danger of being lost. Although it is impossible to preserve all components of the cemetery landscape forever, there are some steps which it is necessary to take to conserve this valuable resource. These are the compilation of a schedule of historic cemeteries, the creation of conservation plans for individual cemeteries, and the identification of vulnerable cemeteries and cemetery components. This will ensure that the cemetery will survive through the twenty-first century, while a greater appreciation of its value will hopefully see its reintegration into the landscape of everyday life.
Conclusion

New Zealand has a rich heritage of nineteenth and early twentieth century urupa, burial grounds, churchyards and cemeteries located throughout the country’s towns, cities and countryside. It is taken for granted that everyone knows what a cemetery is, yet we rarely stop to think how and why these landscapes developed. Like any other component of the built environment and cultural landscape, they are not simply ‘just there’. Rather, they are the result of a complex interaction between historical and cultural influences, processes and ideas.

An analysis of written, visual and material evidence reveals that nineteenth century New Zealanders, indigenous and immigrant, both modified and retained traditional burial practices and forms of memorialisation. As a colony settled predominately by the English, Scottish and Irish, the majority of burial customs practised by nineteenth century settlers were British in origin. At the time New Zealand was colonised the Anglican churchyard remained the main place of burial in Britain, with the modern non- or multi-denominational cemetery beginning to make its appearance in the larger cities, in particular London. Both models were transplanted to the New Zealand context, where churchyards continued to be established after they were prohibited in Britain, and where cemeteries were included in the earliest town plans. Often, settlers translated traditional forms of memorialisation into available materials, and familiar practices were adapted to colonial conditions. A high degree of innovation characterised early burial places in New Zealand, which often bore little resemblance to the burial places of the old world.

The ethnic and religious composition of New Zealand society in the nineteenth century was important in determining what our cemeteries looked like. Although the English predominated numerically, they failed to install the Church of England as the established church of New Zealand. The presence of large Irish and Scottish communities meant that Catholics and Presbyterians were well represented. The presence of other ethnic and religious groups in colonial New Zealand, such as the Jews and Chinese, further influenced the shape cemeteries took. Heart-felt, and
sometimes heated, debates over the consecration of land for burial purposes in some early settlements meant that to accommodate all religions, many of New Zealand's nineteenth century cemeteries were divided into denominational portions. Occasionally religion and ethnicity combined in certain regions to impart a regional flavour to the area's burial grounds and cemeteries. Regionalism could be further enhanced through occupational and economic ties, such as the Otago gold rushes of the 1860s. In other cases certain events lent a regional flavour, as in the case of the Land Wars of the 1860s in Waikato and Taranaki. The ways in which various burial places were established, used and treated in the nineteenth century also contributed to the shaping of the burial places we see today, as did nineteenth century cemetery legislation.

For Maori the nineteenth century was one of great change in all areas of society, including burial practices and forms of memorialisation. Elements of the tangihanga were reformulated in terms of Christianity, while secondary burial became increasingly less practised. During the nineteenth century Maori came to appropriate and adapt European notions of cemetery design, and the Pakeha material culture of death, such as headstones and enclosures. Traditional practices were reinterpreted though the use of Pakeha technologies and materials. Urupa also began to be constructed as adjuncts to churches and marae in the nineteenth century, reflecting changes in Maori society. Despite all these changes, there was also continuity in burial practices. Burial places were, and are, still regraded in terms of tapu, and urupa retain great significance because of their ancestral connections even today.

These processes, influences, events and ideas combined in nineteenth century New Zealand to result in the unique and valuable collection of cemeteries which contain a rich material culture. I have identified ten types of cemetery and burial ground which developed in colonial New Zealand. Maori urupa are the first of these. This is a broad category which can include isolated urupa, and burial grounds associated with Maori churches and marae. Early European burial grounds are the second type. The abundance of wood, and lack of masons, meant that wooden grave markers and enclosures were common features of early settler burial grounds. Mission station burial grounds, often located around the mission church, are the third type. Churchyards, municipal or urban cemeteries, and rural cemeteries are the most
common form of nineteenth century burial place, and comprise types four, five and six. Many are still in use today. Goldfield cemeteries and the graves and cemeteries which were created because of the nineteenth century conflicts between Maori and Europeans are the seventh and eighth types. The family burial grounds and lone graves which can be found throughout New Zealand, particularly in more remote districts, are the last two types. These burial places contain a rich material culture in the form of headstones, monuments and sculptures, wooden and iron enclosures and fences, chapels, sexton’s cottages, paths, trees, inscriptions and epitaphs.

The material culture of the cemetery has a great, yet undervalued, potential in historical research. The basic premise of material culture studies is that objects reflect the beliefs, practices and conventions of the people who created them. The cemetery is a particularly valuable repository of information because of the fact that it has strict contextual controls, both temporal and spatial, and has resisted changes which affect much of the built environment. Cemeteries form a significant element of our cultural and historic landscapes and contain important historical and cultural information about the individuals and communities which created them. As Gilbert argues, cemeteries “reflect vital aspects of our social, religious, folk, architectural and literary history which are not found in such combination in any other place.”¹ This means that the material culture of the cemetery can provide information on many aspects of life and death in nineteenth century New Zealand. These include attitudes toward death, belief in the afterlife, class, wealth, fashion, taste, landscape design, occupation, personal and social relationships, social conventions, religious, political and ethnic affiliation, racial attitudes, and medical history, such as causes of death and notions of hygiene. Valuable as the only record left by many ordinary New Zealanders, occasionally a burial ground is all that is left of a settlement and its people.

Despite their value the treatment of our nineteenth century cemeteries has been characterised by neglect. An examination of cultural, external agency and disciplinary perspectives demonstrates how this heritage is used and valued by contemporary New Zealanders. Cultural perspectives reveal a difference between

¹ Gilbert, 10.
Maori and Pakeha attitudes toward historic cemeteries. While Maori regard them as sacred sites, Pakeha have tended to ignore or even destroy historic cemeteries. Pakeha cultural values have been the greatest factor in influencing the policy of various external agencies toward nineteenth century burial places. Very few are registered with the NZHPT, although an increasing interest in our cemetery heritage is shown in the formation of the HCCTNZ. Disciplinary perspectives reveal that while the cemetery has great research potential, historians largely ignore this, with their focus on the written word, rather than the object. To ensure this rich resource remains for future use there is an urgent need for widespread cemetery conservation. Steps toward achieving this include the compilation of a cemetery schedule, the recognition and conservation of representative cemetery types, the creation of conservation plans, and the identification of vulnerable cemeteries and materials. Building on what the HCCTNZ has begun, there needs to be a collective participation in valuing our collective heritage, and a recognition of the value of the cemetery. In this way New Zealanders can reintegrate the cemetery into our everyday landscapes, reclaiming these forgotten pockets of ourselves.

My thesis has been concerned with the larger, or macro, picture of cemetery development in nineteenth century New Zealand. A greater understanding of the cemetery would be gained from micro-studies, of individual cemeteries, of specific themes, and of the cemetery as part of greater landscapes. The New Zealand cemetery offers many opportunities for study in a diverse range of disciplines including design, architecture, sociology, art history, anthropology, cultural geography, and history, and there remains enormous scope for rewarding and diverse research, which has barely been exploited. As John Gary Brown has observed:

Our wonderful cemeteries may be the last major historical frontier of our collective consciousness, the last undiscovered expression of a complex and creative society.²

² John Gary Brown, 47.
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