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# RECORDING THE HUTTON STREET CEMETERY, OTAHUHU

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In 2012 unconsented fills were dumped in the Roman Catholic cemetery at Hutton Street, Otahuhu, in the gully that ran through the cemetery, and several graves bordering the gully were damaged. The Catholic Diocese of Auckland agreed to remediate the damage by removing contaminated fill, landscaping the balance and repairing damaged graves. CFG Heritage were commissioned to record the damage to graves and their repair, as well as monitor fill removal and contouring (Judge and Mallows 2012; Campbell 2013; Cruickshank 2014).

While cemeteries have long been a focus for archaeologists in New Zealand we were unaware of any protocol being described in the literature for recording graves in New Zealand, so one had to be developed. One necessity was to develop a protocol that could differentiate between damage caused by a single event and that which could be attributed to wear and tear or vandalism so that the limited budget could be focused on recent damage.

The Hutton Street cemetery exhibits general wear and tear that is to be expected in a historic graveyard, as well as a significant amount of damage attributable to vandalism. Many monuments are missing crucifixes, and there are headstones that appear to have been deliberately knocked over. There is also damage in the cemetery due to natural disturbance. The natural slope of the gully and general ground subsidence related to decomposition and settling of grave fill has led to cracking and collapsing of a number of graves, with headstones and other grave furniture leaning out of vertical. Although there are not many trees within the cemetery, there are some invasive weeds which have also managed to crack and disfigure some of the graves. Mature trees can do extensive damage to graves. However, none of this damage was the focus of the remediation project.

Apart from recording condition and threats, it is important to record metrics and descriptive information about the graves, including inscriptions.

The recording system needed to meet certain criteria. It could not be cumbersome, yet needed to record as much information as possible about each plot. The recording form needed to be able to be filled out by a single archaeologist in the field, and the information to be easily entered into an appropriate digital format. Recording was accompanied by digital photography.

Most of the descriptions and definitions that were used in the form were adapted from Mytum (2000). Many of the terms which are discussed in this paper were adapted from Mytum, and are described in the glossary at the end of the paper. Although Mytum's handbook came with a recording



Figure 1. Location of the Hutton Street cemetery.



*Figure 2. Aerial photo of the Hutton Street cemetery, with graves that had been damaged, or potentially damaged, numbered. These numbers are referred to in the text.*

form this was not particularly suitable for the Hutton Street project: it was developed to suit British conditions, and Mytum used a complex system of numerical codes that made recording in the field awkward. Instead, a recording form was developed in Microsoft Excel format, adapting Mytum's methodology to New Zealand conditions which included space for text descriptions rather than numeric field codes, allowing the data to be manually written on a single sided A4 form in the field and later typed into an Excel workbook. The advent of digital photography has enabled the graves to be photographically recorded, meaning that the use of numeric codes for stylistic motifs, etc., is no longer required.

### **Elements of a grave plot**

An individual grave plot usually consists of one or more elements, with the most common ones being the monument (commonly a headstone), kerbing, pavement and fence.

## *Monument*

This is commonly a headstone, but can be an obelisk, cairn or statue, including plinths, or even a plant (one probable grave has an well-established camellia growing at its head). This is generally the most variable element within a grave plot. Because of this, it is often necessary to describe them in greater detail once out of the field, where interpretation of symbols and shapes of headstones can be undertaken. Photography is an important part of recording the monument, and a minimum of five photographs should be taken, one of each face, and a close up of the text box.

The text box is probably the most important part of the monument to be recorded accurately. This should be done in the field by hand, following the text case, and indicating italicised and missing letters where appropriate. There were two examples at Hutton Street (Graves 7 and 20) where the brass text plate had been removed, presumably sold for scrap. Although no information was able to be gained about Grave 7, other than the name 'Magainity' from an old map of the cemetery, the text box on Grave 20 had been recorded in detail in 1986 by Crocker and Knight, so although the box itself is now missing, it can be replicated because the information has been recorded.

The direction that the monument faces, usually based on the text box (although obelisk monuments can have text on all four faces), is important so that if the monument has to be removed, or is knocked over in the future, it can be reset to its original location.

The angle at which the monument is leaning is an important indicator of change over time due to root or weed growth, or ground subsidence. This should be measured at regular intervals to see what impact these natural damages are having on the grave.

Measured drawings, including plan and profile or longitudinal section are also important for recording damage, and the placement of elements within the plot. These should be drawn on an appropriate scale; for an average sized grave plot, no smaller than a 1:20 scale would be recommended.

## *Kerbing*

This normally indicates the outline of a grave plot, or a group of plots reserved by a family. It is commonly made from cement or brick, but other materials can also be used.

## *Pavement*

This is usually in the form of a slab, which effectively seals off the plot. Usually concrete, often with tiled decoration, Hutton Street examples include

asphalt. If it is a multiple burial or is intended to be a multiple burial, installation of the kerb is usually postponed until the plot is full.

### *Fence*

This is usually used in conjunction with a kerb or pavement to prevent access into a plot. They are more common on 19th and early 20th century graves. Commonly made from wood or wrought iron.

### *Damage*

An important aspect of recording damaged graves is designating a damage rating so that resources can best be managed for the remediation of the plots. Judge and Mallows (2012) developed a categorical value system to assess the grave plots that were identified as being damaged through by the Hutton Street dumping events. These three categories were adapted by Cruickshank (2014) and although they were used for machinery damage for the Hutton Street project, they could easily be adapted for other types of damage. The categories are as follows:

- Minor These grave plots were initially identified as ones where minor scratching due to dumping had been identified. This damage did not require remediation from a conservator.
- Moderate These grave plots suffered damage that required a moderate degree of expert repair. This included graves that have suffered chipping and breaks that required repair by a conservator.
- Serious These grave plots required considerable expert mitigation and work to repair them. It also included graves that have had their structural integrity compromised by the dumping event.

### **Examples**

Although the Hutton Street cemetery was established in 1848, not all of the graves are historic. The cemetery was described as full at the time of Crocker and Knight's recording of it (1986), but there are family plots which were used as recently as 2004. The cemetery is scheduled in the Proposed Auckland Unitary Plan, and so protections extend to grave plots of all ages, not just the pre-1900 grave plots that are protected by the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014. Only one of the following three examples is pre-1900 – all the seriously damaged graves were 20th century.

*Grave 1: Mary Molloy (1906), Francis Little (1908), Hannah Little (1925)*

The grave plot consists of a white marble headstone surmounted by a triangle with two crosses at either top corner – it is probable that there was originally a cross at the apex of the triangle but this has long since been lost. The headstone has an ornate text plate carved into it, along with a stylised ‘S’ design, clover leaves and other flower designs incorporated into it. It has a decorative concrete kerbing with a saddled coping and four orb posts sitting on a concrete body stone. It has a concrete pavement with inclusions of shell (ostrich foot, *Struthiolaria papulose*, apertures). It has lead inlaid text which reads:

In  
Memory Of  
*OUR DEAR MOTHER*  
M[AR]Y M[O]L[LO]Y  
DIED AT WAIUKU NOV. 23RD  
1906  
IN HER 69TH YEAR  
*May She Rest In Peace.*  
-----  
*Also Her Brother*  
FRANCIS J. LITTLE  
DIED AUGUST 21ST 1908  
AGED 59 YEARS.  
*ALSO*  
HANNAH LITTLE  
DIED AUGUST 11TH 1925  
AGED 69 YEARS  
*R.I.P*

This grave plot was severely damaged as a result of the earthworks. Either the deposition of fill or the use of machinery in the area has led to the headstone toppling over, resulting in damage to the headstone and kerbing. Fill had been deposited around the western, northern and southern edges of the grave. It was not possible to record the headstone in any detail during initial assessment as it had fallen face down and many of the motifs had been broken off. The monument and grave surrounds were repaired by Stone Conservation Ltd, which involved cleaning, resetting the headstone and repairing it, resetting the concrete kerbing and rebuilding surface damage with



*Figure 3. Grave 1, the Molloy and Little grave, before remediation.*



*Figure 4. Grave 1, the Molloy and Little grave, after remediation.*

either lime-based mortar or marble dust mixed with an epoxy. Once this was done it was recorded in detail.

It was difficult to tell what condition the grave plot was in before it was impacted by the fill dumping. The damage to the central orb posts appeared to be old, as the iron reinforcing bars were heavily corroded and the patina of the damage was not as light in colour as the fresh damage associated with the toppling of the headstone.

The unconsented fill dumping caused serious structural damage, not only to the headstone but the north eastern corner had been shunted out of alignment. There was a portion of the northern edge kerbing that was missing, but it did not appear to be recent damage.

The fill that was packed around the western and northern edges of the grave plot was a mixed clay fill, which contained less of the large chunks of concrete that were present in the fill in the immediate vicinity. This gave the impression that it was intentionally placed around the grave in an attempt to prevent damage to it.

*Grave 8: Patricia McFarlane (1937)*

This grave plot is a single interment, and is a miniature version of a kerbed body stone. It has a cleft in the eastern kerb to assist in rain water removal. The headstone is made of roughhewn red granite with a polished face. The headstone has relief lettering and reads:

IN LOVING MEMORY  
OF  
PATRICIA  
*DARLING DAUGHTER OF*  
ROBERT AND PHYLLIS MCFARLANE  
DIED 13TH JULY 1937  
AGED 18 MONTHS  
*R.I.P*

This plot was initially feared to have been badly affected by flooding that occurred once the gully had been filled. The high water mark is visible on the headstone as a dark line above the word 'PATRICIA' in Figures 5 and 6. All that was visible of the grave was a partially obscured headstone and what was assumed to be a segment of kerbing on the northern edge of the headstone. The soil obscuring the grave plot was finer than the fill material and it was thought to be connected to the flooding and general sediment flow down the hill.



*Figure 5. Grave 8, Patricia McFarlane, before remediation.*



*Figure 6. Grave 8, Patricia McFarlane, after remediation.*

Once the sediment was removed two small areas of damage in the top corners of the headstone became visible, which appear as if it had had two small decorative items pinned into it. These were not recovered in the fill surrounding the grave and may have been stolen by vandals.

The headstone is not in situ, but has been placed back neatly on the bodystone. This is not thought to have happened during the filling event, as the damage to the portion of the kerbing where the headstone originally sat has a weathered patina.

*Grave 15: James Donnelly (1868)*

James Donnelly was one of the Fencible settlers of Otahuhu, who had previously served with the 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment of Foot in India. He was granted an acre of land on 22 December 1854 on Church Street, Otahuhu. He died in Ramarama on 9 June 1868.

A fragment of headstone was initially uncovered in the grass to the south of the last visible grave along the east side of the cemetery. On clearing the grass around it, a further four fragments of the same headstone were recovered. Judging by the distribution of the fragments, it is likely that it fell and broke and has remained in situ. The headstone appears to be a limestone flat-topped marker with a central semi-circle element. The damage to this grave was not associated with dumping of fills. The text has been incised into it and reads:

OF  
[Your C]harity  
Pray For t[he S]oul of[f]  
JAMES DON[N]JELLY  
who departed [this] life  
on the [...] of [...] 1868  
[... ...] wife  
[...] Donnelly  
[...] of he[r] affection

After gently probing around the headstone, some concrete was identified to the east of the headstone fragments. The grass was removed in a 1 x 3 m area orientated with the headstone to see if the concrete was a kerbing or pavement relating to this plot. On inspection, it proved to be concrete debris of an unknown origin.



*Figure 7. Grave 15, fragment of James Donnelly's headstone.*



*Figure 8. Grave 15, four fragments of James Donnelly's headstone after excavation.*

## Concluding remarks

Although this paper has focused on the individual grave plots, preventative maintenance within a cemetery is crucial to prevent grave damage from weed and root growth. Regular maintenance, especially in closed historic cemeteries, will also show that they are not 'abandoned' and may deter the delinquent behaviour that often leads to vandalism.

Even with a preventative maintenance programme, it is important to create a record of graves prior to damage or decay becoming a problem. The recording protocol that was devised for use at Hutton Street cemetery made it possible to identify certain characteristics used to differentiate between damage caused by a single event and that which has occurred over time through vandalism and natural processes. The onus for this type of recording normally falls on the organisation who oversees the cemetery, as the archaeologist usually only gets involved once the damage has already been done. If that record is maintained and updated where necessary, the graves will be able to be more accurately restored if needed. A well maintained grave will begin to decline over time, and keeping a record of graves within a cemetery will assist in future efforts of restoration as well as provide invaluable research data.

## Glossary

Bodystone	An elevated concrete box, often incorporating a kerb and pavement as a single element. Common on sloping cemeteries, especially around the 1920s and 1930s.
Element	An individual identifiable part of a grave.
Fence	Usually used in conjunction with a pavement or kerb, to enclose a grave and restrict entry.
Grave plot	A plot which has been used for the sub-surface interment of an individual or property used to represent that individual. This normally contains a number of elements including a monument. We used this term to differentiate between a grave within an established cemetery and those which are not.
Kerbing	The outline of a plot, or a group of plots reserved by a family. It is commonly made from cement or brick.
Monument	This is commonly a headstone, but can be an obelisk, cairn or statue, including plinths, or even a plant.
Pavement	A surface normally consisting of concrete, brick, or stone placed on the ground over a grave, effectively closing it off.
Plot	A demarcated area of a cemetery given over to an individual, family, or other social group. There is a finite number of these

available in a cemetery, and when they are all reserved or used the cemetery is considered closed.

Text box Usually on the front face of a monument, providing information about the interred, including date of death.

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