

Wanganui District Council Heads Road Cemetery Management Plan



1. Purpose

The purpose of this Management Plan is to provide the Wanganui District Council with adequate strategies, guidelines and actions that will allow appropriate management of the historic Heads Road Cemetery and discourage activities inconsistent with the nature and cultural significance of the cemetery.

It is acknowledged that the site has a primary role as a cemetery ie a place of internment and remembrance. Descendants of those buried there have a particular interest in and regard for the site as a special place. Appreciation of the site is expected to increase in the future.

A Cemetery Conservation and Management Strategy will be developed by the Wanganui District Council in the future and this management plan will form part of the Strategy. The Strategy will focus on the care of physical objects such as memorials.

2. Historic Context

Protection and preservation of this site is warranted because of its historic and social significance, locally and nationally, and its importance as an expression of the cultural values of the founding years of Wanganui. This importance has been recognised by its registration as a Category I site (nationally significant) by the Historic Places Trust.

This is one of the oldest European public cemeteries in New Zealand, the site having been identified by the New Zealand Company in its 1842 plan for Petre, later known as the Town of Wanganui. Early records refer to this cemetery as the "Sandhills Cemetery", the first recorded burial being 25 November 1843. As the town grew, a road was constructed to the river mouth then known as "The Heads", hence the name Heads Road. Burials still take place in family plots at Heads Road.

The importance of the role played by the military forces stationed in Wanganui cannot be overstated. The Ministry for Culture and Heritage views the graves of the casualties of the New Zealand Wars 1840-1872 (formerly known as the Land Wars) at Heads Road Cemetery as being of high significance and has responsibility for their long-term maintenance.

The Ministry's Heritage Operations Unit is also directly responsible for the care in perpetuity of the graves of Commonwealth war dead of the two World Wars. "True" war graves are the graves of serving members of the forces who died between certain dates: for WW1 between 3 August 1914 and 31 August 1921, and for WWII between 3 September 1939 and 31 December 1947. There are a small number of WWI war graves in the cemetery.

The site as a whole is unique in New Zealand and comparable in its aesthetic as well as historic value to well recognized and protected sites in Britain (such as Highgate Cemetery, London) - Report by Detlef Kline, Conservator, 15 June 2005.

More in-depth information on the history and significance of the cemetery is contained in the registration report prepared by Wendy Pettigrew.

Given the social and historic significance of the site, and especially its monuments, management should adhere to the principles and practices set out in the ICOMOS* NZ Charter (*International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites).

Management Action

1. Designate and register Head Roads Cemetery as a Historic Place under the Historic Places Act 1993 to ensure national and local recognition of this historic site. Completed Category I classification 22 June 2007, no 7700.

3. Site Description

The cemetery consists of:

- Pt Rs C, Town of Wanganui – Main Cemetery
- Pt Lot 30, Deeds 133 – sliver far north-east corner of main cemetery
- Rs F Town of Wanganui Catholic Cemetery
- Sect 545 Town of Wanganui - Jewish Cemetery

See attached site Plan D-130253

4. Council Strategy

The cemetery activity contributes to the Council's Vision, Mission, Values and Goals which is to promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of the Wanganui District. The preservation and enhancement of the cemetery links to the Council's Family Friendly strategy as the cemetery is important to many Wanganui families and is an important amenity space.

5. Statues, Acts, Regulations and Bylaws

The Cemetery is managed under:

1. Wanganui District Council By-law 1996 Part 7 Cemeteries and crematoria.
2. Burial and Cremations Act 1964.
3. Burial and Cremation Amendment Act 2000.
4. Health & Safety Act 2002.
5. Wanganui District Plan Section 24 Reserves and Open Spaces.
6. War Graves & Servicemen's Cemeteries administration of Department of Internal Affairs.
7. Historic Places Act 1993.

6. Current Uses, Activities and Interest Groups

The Cemetery has a number of functions:

1. Burial Place
2. Amenity Space
3. Education, genealogy and historic resource
4. Cemetery Circuit Boxing Day Motor Cycle Races.

The Cemetery is of particular interest to:

1. Families of those interred
2. The District Council
3. Friends of Heads Road Cemetery
4. Cemetery Circuit organizers and spectators
5. Historic Places Trust
6. Founders Society, Genealogical Society

7. General Public

The management plan will clarify the relationships between these, and their respective rights and obligations.

7. Management Objectives

- Govern the usage of any events that impact on the preservation of the historic cemetery.
- Fulfill the Wanganui District Council legal obligations.
- Maintain, enhance and promote the historic features.
- Provide for enhanced public access and use.
- Fulfill the site's educational and historic potential to the District.
- Develop a Cemetery Conservation and Management Strategy.
- Integrate the above with continued cemetery operations.

8. Archaeological Issues

The Cemetery is an archaeological site, having been associated with human activity prior to 1900. Under the Historic Places Act 1993 application must be made to the New Zealand Historic Places Trust for authority for any activity that might destroy, damage or modify the site.

While this does not affect normal cemetery operations at Heads Road, it could affect other site works such as removal of tree stumps or digging of fence post holes. The Trust will be asked to provide further advice in relation to the preparation of the Cemetery Conservation and Management Strategy.

Management Action

1. No digging or disturbance of areas around graves or on site to be undertaken without archeological advice and authority from New Zealand Historic Places Trust.
2. No structures, permanent or temporary, shall be placed on or near graves without the consent of, and in consultation with, the Council.

9. Site Maintenance & Management

The Cemetery is maintained by the District Council with the grass mown on a regular basis, general weed control and tree maintenance.

Management Action

Weed Spraying

1. Weed spraying of grave areas undertaken by the Council as required.

Weed Removal

1. Friends of Heads Road may undertake voluntary removal of agapanthus and other problem weeds to eradicate these plants from the graves, if required.

Fencing

1. No permanent fencing within the cemetery boundary shall be installed without the permission of the Council.
2. The fence at the south-eastern corner of the main cemetery with its permanent posts to be repositioned closer to Heads Road, ensuring that none of the graves are compromised by its erection. Completed.

Toilets

1. Investigate the installation of a public toilet in the old post mortem room of the morgue.

Trees

1. As part of regular tree maintenance, the Council will monitor the health and safety of the Ridgway Street Scots pines to ensure the conservation and preservation of nearby grave sites.

Seating

1. Provide traditional park type seats for visitors in suitable locations.
2. The organizers of the Cemetery Circuit Races to provide temporary timber planked seating to accommodate spectators.

10. Monument Restoration

A very high proportion of the gravestones mark the resting places of people important to Wanganui and New Zealand history (e.g. Rev. Richard Taylor, William Hogg Watt, Henry Sarjeant, John Tiffin Stewart, Thomas McDonnell, Samuel Drew, Archibald Willis, John Frame MacBeth).

Many of the headstones or monuments were made in England or Scotland in the 19th century and are mostly in original condition. The fact that the headstones were imported from Britain in the 19th century suggests the deceased were important figures in local and NZ History. The replacement value (theoretical insurance value) of a number of the headstones or monuments is extremely high, running into hundreds of thousands of dollars for individual markers. (*ie Thomas Reid 1890, Wm.J. York 1905, John Ballance 1893*).

Headstones and monuments are the responsibility of family members. Where these can not be traced Council will take action as it considers appropriate.

Management Action

1. Undertake a site survey and record and digitally photograph each monument, noting their condition and any damage. Any later significant changes should be recorded.
2. Liaise with family members prior to any restoration beyond weeding, cleaning and securing of broken items.
3. Based on a professionally prepared Conservation Management Plan, draw up a restoration programme, beginning with identified priority monuments.
4. Undertake conservation of damaged headstones as required and allow for an annual treatment programme of headstones using an appropriate biocide.
4. Liaise with a stone mason and specialist in heritage monument conservation and restoration.

Note that Lottery Environment and Heritage Fund would be a source of funding, both for the development of a Conservation Management Plan and implementation of a Restoration Programme and for development of information and interpretation at the Cemetery, including development of the morgue as an interpretation centre (see below).

11. Information and Interpretation

The main notice board within the cemetery provides some information, but there is scope for more information to encourage people to appreciate the history of the cemetery and of Wanganui itself.

Management Action

1. Investigate developing the old morgue building as an interpretive centre with displays on the history of the cemetery as well as information about those buried there.
2. Improve signage within the cemetery by 2010.
3. Add information on key burial plots to the notice board.
4. Investigate access from the riverside walkway to encourage people to visit the cemetery as part of their wider exploration of Wanganui.
5. Investigate a web site, linked to monumental records to promote the cemetery and activities.

12. Vehicles

Only vehicles and plant suitable for the purpose shall be driven along roads, footpaths and across grass areas within Heads Road Cemetery. Vehicles will only travel on grass if conditions allow.

Management Action

1. Review types of vehicles and plant used within the cemetery in order to minimize potential damage.
2. Enforce By-law provision that no person shall, without the approval of an officer, take any vehicle into a cemetery between the hours of sunset and sunrise or permit a vehicle to remain in the cemetery after sunset on any day.

13. Community Involvement

The Jewish community works with the Council on any issues regarding the Jewish section the cemetery.

The Friends of Heads Road is a newly formed group with an interest in conservation and undertaking small maintenance work, like weeding and cleaning of headstones, and will be recording valuable information about the graves and headstones.

The New Zealand Historic Places Trust has registered the cemetery as a Category I historic site. This is based on the cemetery having national significance.

Management Action

1. To produce an Information Guide for the Cemetery.
2. Liaise with all community groups on preserving graves and headstones.
3. In partnership with the New Zealand Historic Places, the Friends of Heads Road Cemetery will be the main volunteer group to undertake site surveys, provide guided walks and undertake minor maintenance tasks.

14. Security

General public access to the cemetery carries with it associated risks. These include on-going vandalism resulting in smashed and overturned grave markers, headstones, monuments, the 'souveniring' of elements from grave sites, and general activities inconsistent with the nature and cultural significance of an historic cemetery.

To safeguard the importance of Heads Road cemetery it is important to increase public awareness of the significance of the cemetery. This awareness should see the general public notifying the Council of any actions that may cause damage to this historic site.

Management Action

1. The Council operates a 24 hour emergency call out service
2. Effective surveillance of the site on a regular basis both formally and informally
3. The cemetery shall remain open to the members of the public at all times, unless prior arrangement is made with the Council for special events.

15. Cultural Considerations

The Jewish section is represented by a single headstone bearing the names of 13 people interred there. Wanganui had a strong Jewish community around the year 1900 but following the death of the last member, the cemetery fell into a neglected state. In the 1960's the section was formally closed, the land tided and the memorial erected.

Very few Maori are buried in the Heads Road cemetery as they had their own burial grounds elsewhere. There are burials of significance to Maori, but the cemetery is not an Urupa.

In the Catholic section of the cemetery, there are graves of Catholic nuns, and the graves of two priests, one who was responsible for the construction of several Catholic buildings in Wanganui, and one who spent time on the Whanganui River assisting the mission to Jerusalem (Hiruharama).

Management Action

1. Consult with members of all faiths in regard to any major conservation and preservation practices.

16. Cemetery Circuit Races

While the majority of race spectators take a very considerate approach to the use of the Heads Road cemetery, there are issues relating to the most sensitive part of the cemetery - the mound by the Robert Holden corner. There is little issue with people sitting on concrete graves while attending the Cemetery Races, but actions such as standing on vulnerable edges is putting the graves at risk.

Management Action

1. Race organizers shall take measures to ensure those attending the Cemetery Circuit Races do not cause damage to monuments and grave surrounds
2. No members of the public will attach temporary or permanent structures to graves or headstones during the Cemetery Circuit Races
3. Prior to the yearly Cemetery Circuit Races, the Council, the New Zealand Historic Places and other interested stakeholders of the cemetery will meet with the race organizers to ensure that the requirements of the historic Cemetery Circuit Races and the historic cemetery are met.
4. Install a pedestrian access from Hookers' yard into the north end of the cemetery to enable people to gain access without walking over the graves. Completed

17. Review Date

The Management Plan should be reviewed by 30 June 2015.



Heads Road Cemetery Management Plan Map 2010