

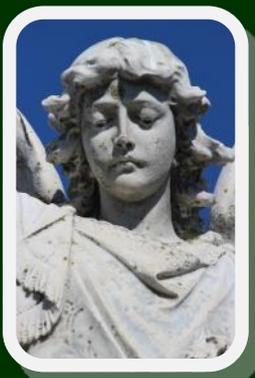


R.I.P.orter

January
2021

Caroline M. Keightley (7 Dec 1898)

- Cemetery searches detailing the location of a grave of those interred can be shown on iCemetery. Download the FREE app now!
- Size of Cemetery 40 acres (or around 16.5 hectares).
- Over 90,000 interments in 50,000 grave sites.
- The Cemetery offers a service of grave planting sites with Gazania (prostrate ground cover with silver foliage and yellow flowers, as can be seen in banner). Contact the cemetery office if you are interested in this and other services, such as annual maintenance of allotments.
- Waverley Cemetery St Thomas Street, BRONTE NSW 2024 P: (02) 9083 8899 F: (02) 9665 4785 Email: cemetery@waverley.nsw.gov.au



Mrs. Caroline M. Keightley, who died at Prince Alfred Hospital on Wednesday 7 December 1898, was the heroine of one of the most stirring incidents of early Australian bush ranging. The story of her ride to Bathurst, in order to obtain the ransom wherewith to purchase from the bushrangers her husband's life, is well-known. Not only has it ever been a favourite chapter with readers of the history of those troublous times, but Rolf Boldrewood, one of the most popular of authors of Australian tales, has immortalised her by making her one of the heroines in his book, 'Robbery Under Arms.' Mrs. Keightley, who was 67 years (?) of age at the time of her death, has been ill for some time.

Having in her youth attained some success as an amateur actress, she afterwards adopted the stage as a profession, and played for some time in a drama called "Bail Up," founded upon the incident related below. She was a daughter of the Henry Rotton, of Bathurst, a well-known and highly respected resident of that district, which he represented in the first Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, and widow of the late Henry M'Crummin Keightley, who was one of the oldest and most distinguished officials under the then N. S. Wales Government and who was instrumental in breaking up a notorious gang of bushrangers, and during which he shot one of the gang named

Bourke. In this encounter Mrs. Keightley also bore a brave part, by riding to the Commercial Bank, Bathurst, to procure the money for the ransom of her husband, who was in imminent danger of being shot by the gang, who held him in custody under dire threats of vengeance. The particulars were described in a paper of October 28, 1863, and briefly are as follow: On the evening of Saturday, October 24, between 6 and 7pm the bush rangers Gilbert, O'Mealley, Ben Hall, Vane, and Burke, made their appearance at the house of Mr. Keightley, the police magistrate and gold commissioner at Dunn's Plains, near Rockley. Mr. Keightley was outside the house, and seeing the men approaching, thought they were police in disguise. They called on him to bail up, but he retired to the house; the arms and ammunition he had provided for his defence, as he was expecting an attack, being beyond his reach at the moment through an unfortunate over-sight. Snatching up a double-barrelled gun, only one barrel of which was loaded, and a revolver, Mr. Keightley, with a guest. Dr. Peechey, took up a station at the door, when a shower of bullets was fired at them by the bushrangers. Burke, approaching the house, was instantly shot in the abdomen, and, leaning, against the wall; said, 'I'm done for; but I'll not be taken alive,' and placing a pistol at his forehead attempted

to blow out his brains. The first shot only grazed his forehead, but the second blew away a portion of his skull, and he fell to the ground. Seeing what had occurred the bush rangers kept up a constant fire on the house. They continued their fire on Mr. Keightley and the doctor, who had by this time got into a loft above the dwelling. As the bushrangers threatened to fire the house, the two gentlemen came down fearing that if they did not do so they would carry out their threat and murder the female inmates. On reaching the ground Vane struck Dr. Peechey a violent blow knocking him down. Vane was then about to shoot Mr. Keightley and called on him to follow him down the paddock. Mrs. Keightley implored them to spare her husband's life, but apparently without avail. Vane said that he and Burke had been brought up as boys together, and had been mates ever since, and that the gun that had deprived him of life should take the life of the men who killed him. Mrs. Keightley ran up to Ben Hall, and clutching him by the collar, said, 'I know you are Ben Hall, and they say you are the most humane, respectable, and best of them all; for God's sake do not let them murder my husband — save his life.' She also addressed Gilbert in similar terms, begging him to interfere. (O'Meally was then away looking after the horses). Gilbert and Hall appeared to be moved, and the latter called

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upon Vane to desist. After a parley, Gilbert and Hall dictated the terms on which Mr. Keightley's life should be spared. The Government had placed a reward of £500 on Burke's head, and the amount of the reward was to be handed to them by 2 p.m. the following day (Sunday). The doctor was allowed to go to Rockley to fetch his instruments to try and cure Burke, but when he returned Burke was dead. Mrs. Keightley then prevailed upon one of them to fetch O'Meally, fearing he would not accept the ransom. He at first refused, but was ultimately pacified, and the party went into the house, where they were served with spirits and wine, Mrs Keightley first tasting it to show that it was not poisoned. It was then arranged that Mr. Keightley should be taken to a place called the Dog Rock, on a hill nearby. Mrs Keightley, in company with Dr Peechey was then sent to Bathurst to fetch the money (£500), the understanding being that if there was any treachery Mr. Keightley would be shot immediately, and the bushrangers would fight those who approached for the £500. Mrs Keightley then rode into Bathurst with Dr. Peechey, and sought her father, who instantly went to the Commercial Bank at 4 o'clock in the morning, procured the amount required, and started for Dunn's Plains. The amount having been handed over to the bushrangers, Mr. Keightley was set at liberty, and soon arrived at Bathurst. From Rockley to Bathurst and back, the ride which Mrs. Keightley undertook in order to get the money, is a distance of nearly 60 miles; and the road was at that time a very rough one. One of her surviving sons, Mr. Cyril Keightley, is a well-known actor. He returned to Sydney some days ago to see his mother in her last hours.

1898 'Bushranging Days.', *The Scrutineer and Berrima District Press (NSW: 1892 - 1948)*, 10 December, p. 2.
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article124069213>

Caroline Keightley was interred in Waverley Cemetery. Her unmarked allotment is in Section 7. Newspaper reports have Caroline's age at death variously as 51, 57, in her 60th year, 67 and nearly 70! The Cemetery records show her age as 57.

Take a tour

**General History Tours
A, B, C & D are held
on Saturdays**

02 Jan 09.00am Tour A
09 Jan 09.00am Tour B
16 Jan 09.00am Tour C
23 Jan 09.00am Tour D
30 Jan 09.00am Tour A

06 Feb 09.00am Tour B
13 Feb 10.00am Tour C
20 Feb 09.00am Tour D
27 Feb 09.00am Tour A

Bookings for tours are essential.
 Book through Eventbrite
 Waverley Cemetery Tours

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/waverley-cemetery-tours-tickets-35366776982>



Friends of Waverley Cemetery

The **iCemetery** app which has been of invaluable assistance in helping people locate individuals in the cemetery was decommissioned at the end 2020 by the Canadian developers of the app.

Data from the Cemetery's data base will be migrated to a web search engine with the potential to provide searchers with an even greater amount of data than was available on the iCemetery app. We will bring you information about how you access the search engine as it comes to hand.

The Friends of Waverley Cemetery group has several projects currently underway and is looking for interested volunteers to assist with photography of monuments, and research of individuals interred in the cemetery. If you have an interest in gardening then you might be just the person to join the Friends of Waverley **"Adopt a Grave"** initiative.

Volunteers with a specific skill set which they feel would be of assistance are encouraged to contact the group through its email which is friendsofwaverleycemetery@gmail.com with the view to becoming members and assisting FoWC group in its work.

The next general meeting of the Executive and Standing Committees of the Friends group will be held on Saturday 13 February at 9.00am at the Cemetery. Depending on what health restrictions might be in place and numbers attending, the specific venue will be decided on the day. Potential and new members are encouraged to attend this first meeting of the year so that current members can put a name to your face.

To visit the FoWC Face Book Page which is updated every few days go to <https://www.facebook.com/FoWCBronteNSW2024/>

Gregory Ross
 President/Secretary

