



WAVERLEY  
CEMETERIES



## Friends of Waverley Cemeteries (Volunteers)



MAY 2025

### Leon Francis Victor Caron (1850-1905)

- Cemetery searches detailing the location of a grave of those interred in Waverley Cemetery and South Head General Cemetery can be found on the website.
- Waverley Cemeteries 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 Waverley Cemeteries office if you are interested in this and other services, such as annual maintenance of allotments.
- Waverley Cemeteries office is at the corner of Trafalgar Street and St Thomas Street, BRONTE NSW 2024
- P: (02) 9083 8899  
F: (02) 9665 4785  
Email: cemetery@waverley.nsw.gov.au



**L**eon Caron musical director was born on 13 January 1850 at Boulogne-sur-Mer. France, son of Louis Victor Abel Caron, contractor, and his wife Louise Josephine, née Rimez. He studied music at Boulogne as a young man with the organist Alexandre Guilmant (1837-1911), and remained his lifetime correspondent. The Boulogne Municipal Council sent him to the Paris Conservatoire in the late 1860s, but his studies were interrupted by the Franco-Prussian war, unfortunately for Caron, who in 1870 was short-listed for the Prix de Rome which was not awarded in that year of national crisis. To escape the Paris commune, Caron moved on to London where he was engaged as a violinist in the orchestra of Jules Prudence Rivière (1819-1879) at the Alhambra Theatre. After a year he joined the famous concert orchestra of Theodore Thomas (1835-1905) in America and remained with it until it was disbanded in 1876.

In that year Caron went to Melbourne and made his first appearance as conductor at the Melbourne Opera House. He then accepted the position of conductor with the Lyster Grand Italian Opera Company. In 1880 he won the prize of a hundred guineas offered by the commissioners for an original oratorio or cantata to mark the

opening of the Melbourne International Exhibition. The cantata, *Victoria*, to a poor text by the prohibitionist poet, J. W. Meaden, was first performed under Caron's direction at the start of the exhibition, by a choir of 1000 voices and an orchestra of 125.

In the next decade, for part of which he organized his own company under the title of the Caron Opera Company, he concentrated on performing opera in English, and gave local *premieres* in English of a great many operas, including Bizet's *Carmen*, Ambroise Thomas's *Mignon*, Massé's *Paul et Virginie* and Auber's *Fra Diavolo*. In April 1889 he joined the Royal Comic Opera Company, directing as its first work the Australian *première* of *The Yeomen of the Guard*. In 1887 he was a founder of the Orpheus Club in Sydney, where he was also permitted to give a Sunday concert, one of the first under amended regulations.

Under contract to J. C. Williamson in a Gilbert and Sullivan season which ended in Sydney in February 1905, Caron suffered the first of several heart attacks and against his physician's advice moved with the company to New Zealand. There he



**Leon Francis Victor Caron (1850-1905)**, by unknown engraver  
[La Trobe Picture Collection](#).

resumed work after further illness but left the company and returned to Sydney in May. He died at the Gresham Hotel on the 29th. He was buried in the Anglican section of the Waverley cemetery, after a spectacular procession through the city, and one of the most fatuous funeral orations that can ever have been mouthed. 'It was all very beautiful', the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported.

Three bands played Handel's Dead March, Beethoven's Funeral March and the Chopin March. All along the route great throngs of people gathered.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on the obsequies which took place at Waverley Cemetery "very late in the afternoon, with the slant beams of the slowly setting sun falling

Why not join the Friends of **Waverley** Cemeteries?

upon an azure breadth of the ocean, giving radiant whiteness to innumerable headstones, and placing in bold relief the grand concourse of people that surrounded the last resting place of the French musician. Here also a band of choristers from the Royal Comic Opera Company, rendered as a last and sad anthem, "The Long Day Closes". Sullivan's music swelled out upon the evening air with melancholy sweetness in a tender sequence of unhurried harmony.

In addition to his work as a professional performer Caron published in Australia a substantial quantity of his own music, mostly slight and ephemeral, but an examination of the full score of *Victoria*, which was published in a fairly accurate vocal score by Allan & Novello in 1880, shows him as a composer of real if minor talent and of polished craftsmanship.

#### Citation details

Kenneth Hince, 'Caron, Leon Francis Victor (1850–1905)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/caron-leon-francis-victor-3167/text4741>, published first in hardcopy 1969.

CORRY Marion, *Waverley Cemetery Who's Who: Encore*, Waverley Library, ISBN 0646 23542 7, 87 pages, 1995, p44.



The flag party approaches the Irish Memorial

## Take a tour

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

10 May @ 9.00am Tour D (Michael)

17 May, @ 9.00am Tour A (David)

31 May. @ 9.00am Tour B (Sally)

14 Jun @ 10 am Tour C (Michael)

21 Jun @ 9.00am. Tour D (David)

Book through Eventbrite for Waverley Cemetery's Saturday Tours

A Walking History Tour of Waverley Cemetery gives a glimpse into the past. Tickets, Multiple Dates | Eventbrite



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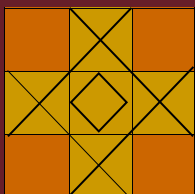
## Friends of Waverley Cemeteries

The large group which attended the Easter Sunday commemoration service at the Irish Memorial heard of the history behind Michael Dwyer, the Wicklow Chief. The commemoration lasted just on the advertised hour and was well received by all in attendance.

Recent visitors to the cemetery would have noted that the old open wire cage bins are being replaced by larger, sturdier bins with a cover to deter the ibis and ravens from rummaging through the bins.

If you would like to become a Friend you are encouraged to contact the group through its email: [friendsofwaverleycemetery@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofwaverleycemetery@gmail.com)

Currently we require two people who would be interested in leading tours.



To visit the FoWC Face Book Page which is updated every few days, go to

<https://www.facebook.com/FoWCBronteNSW2024>

Tony Billingsley President/Secretary

