



R.I.P.orter

May
2021

Louis Becke (1855-1913)

- 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



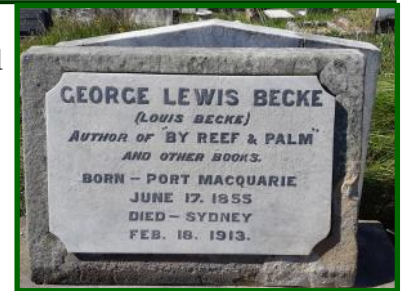
George Lewis (Louis) Becke (1855-1913), author, was born on 18 June 1855 at Port Macquarie, New South Wales, son of Frederick Becke, clerk of petty sessions, and his wife Caroline Matilda, née Beilby, both English-born. Becke received little formal education before 1867 when the family moved to Sydney and he attended Fort Street Model School. Two years later, with his brother Vernon, he took passage to San Francisco and was away for nineteen months. At 16 he stowed away to Samoa, taking a job in Apia as a book-keeper. He was 18 when he met the notorious Captain 'Bully' Hayes who was to become a central character in his later writings. Early in 1874 Hayes signed Becke on as supercargo on the *Leonora* which, some ten weeks later, sank off Kusaie, stranding the survivors there. When a British warship arrived in pursuit of Hayes six months later, Becke was arrested for piracy and taken to Brisbane. Acquitted, he joined the Palmer River gold rush, worked at Ravenswood station (1877), and as a bank clerk in Townsville (1878-79).

By April 1880 Becke was in the Ellice Islands,

employed as a trader. Next February he opened his own store at Nukufetau and there married Nelea Tikena. Later that year he lost everything in a shipwreck and for the next few years worked in New Britain and at Majuro in the Marshall Islands.

Late in 1885 Becke returned to New South Wales and on 10 February 1886 at Port Macquarie, he married Elizabeth (Bessie) Mary Stuart, née Maunsell (d.1932). He worked in Sydney as a contract draftsman for the Lands Department until they went to Townsville, Queensland, in 1888. He was assistant secretary to the New South Wales branch of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia for a few months in 1890 before accepting a post in the islands again. He returned to Sydney from Noumea in January 1892.

Unable to find regular work, Becke turned to writing. His friend Ernest Favenc persuaded him to put his South Sea yarns on paper and introduced him to J. F. Archibald. His first signed story, 'Tis in the blood', appeared in the *Bulletin* on 6 May 1893. *By Reef and Palm*, a collection of short stories,



was published in London in 1894 and reprinted three times that year. Further collections of stories followed in 1896 and 1897. Becke went on to write thirty-four books.

He sold all his books outright and success brought him no wealth; in April 1894 he was declared bankrupt. In 1896 he separated from his wife (who tried to divorce him in 1903 and 1910) and left for England, accompanied by his daughter Nora (b.1888) and by Fanny Sabina Long (1871-1959). In London Becke was received as a celebrity. He and Sabina lived at Eastbourne, where their two daughters were born, and later in Ireland and northern France; he visited Jamaica in 1902. He raised finance in 1908 to back an expedition to the Pacific to record folklore. On 22 July, before leaving for Suva via New Zealand, he and Sabina went through a form of marriage at St Pancras

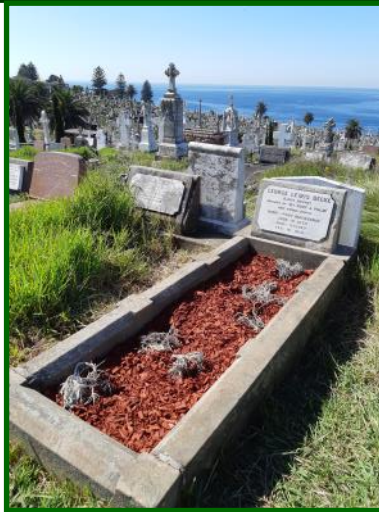
Why not join the Friends of Waverley Cemetery?

Register Office.

By 1909 Becke had returned to Sydney. He still wrote for the *Bulletin* but creditors hounded him, he was drinking heavily, and he spent the last two years of his life ill and alone. He died of cancer on 18 February 1913 in his room at the York Hotel, King Street; friends in the *Bulletin* office arranged his burial in Waverley cemetery. He was predeceased by two sons and survived by three daughters.

Citation details

Sally O'Neill, 'Becke, George Lewis (Louis) (1855–1913)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/becke-george-lewis-louis-5177/text8699>, published first in hardcopy 1979,.



The restoration of Louis Becke's headstone is complete. This was a joint initiative between FoWC and Becke family.

Take a tour

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

01 May 09.00am Tour A
08 May 09.00am Tour B
15 May 09.00am Tour C
22 May 09.00am Tour D
29 May 09.00am Tour A

05 June 09.00am Tour B
12 June 09.00am Tour C
19 June 09.00am Tour D
26 June 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 Cemeteries

Given that Waverley Council has two cemeteries for which it has oversight, (Waverley Cemetery and South Head Cemetery), new badging is being developed to cover both cemeteries viz **Waverley Cemeteries**. To reflect that change the FoWC had amended its name from Friends of Waverley Cemetery to Friends of Waverley Cemeteries. **Tours of South Head are currently being planned.**



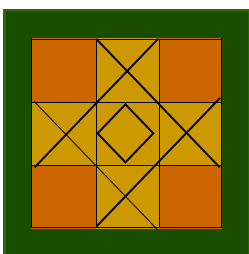
Friends of Waverley Cemeteries

The next general meeting of the Executive and Standing Committees of the Friends group will be held on **Saturday 12 June at 9.00am at the Cemetery.**

The Friends of Waverley Cemeteris group has several projects currently underway and is looking for interested volunteers to assist with photography of monuments, research of individuals interred in the cemetery and weeding. 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.

To visit the FoWC Face Book Page which is updated every few days go to **<https://www.facebook.com/FoWCBronTENSW2024/>**



Gregory Ross
President/Secretary

