



TRAIL 2

Townsville Women

WEST END CEMETERY TRAILS



**Heritage
Trails**
of Townsville

INTRODUCTION

Many of Townsville's most influential and prominent citizens during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were women. Life was tough in early Townsville with women facing a number of challenges including running households in an unforgiving and unknown environment.

The city of Townsville owes a debt of gratitude to the great number of women who have contributed to its development and growth. It is through Townsville's historic places, such as the West End Cemetery, that an insight into their lives, their contributions and their achievements is understood.

CEMETERY TRAILS

This booklet is the second in a series of three trails that have been produced to enable visitors to the West End Cemetery to undertake self-guided walks. Projects such as this provide the community with a better understanding of the city's rich history, who the people were and what life was like.

This brochure recognises the contribution by Townsville women to the development of the city in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In compiling this trail we have included stories of the lives of average Townsville women, not just those who were famous. Among the women recognised in this brochure are Janet Burgess, Esther Camp, Hannah Pengelly, Rose Blaxland and Catherine Robinson.

It is the endeavour of Townsville City Council to undertake gradual conservation of the cemetery. This work will be undertaken according to the recommendations in the West End Cemetery Conservation Strategy completed in 1996.



WELCOME TO TOWNSVILLE'S WEST END CEMETERY

The West End Cemetery operated as Townsville's general cemetery between 1866 and 1902.

Although officially closed in 1930, burials continue within pre-purchased family owned plots.

The West End Cemetery is a substantially intact example of a Victorian cemetery, containing early headstones, plantings and perimeter fencing. Individuals interred at the cemetery include people that have made significant contributions to the history of Townsville, the region and Queensland. As a result, the cemetery is a unique and valuable source of historical information.

The West End Cemetery 'Townsville Women' trail is a self-guided trail which endeavours to provide an insight into the lives and times of some of Townsville's women. The trail also provides the opportunity to experience the history associated with Townsville's oldest known historic cemetery.



*West End Cemetery c.1920. Photograph also shows Mount Stuart in background and suburb of West End surrounding cemetery grounds
(Source: North Queensland Photographic Collection, James Cook University)*

1 SELINA PORTER

(1869-1884)

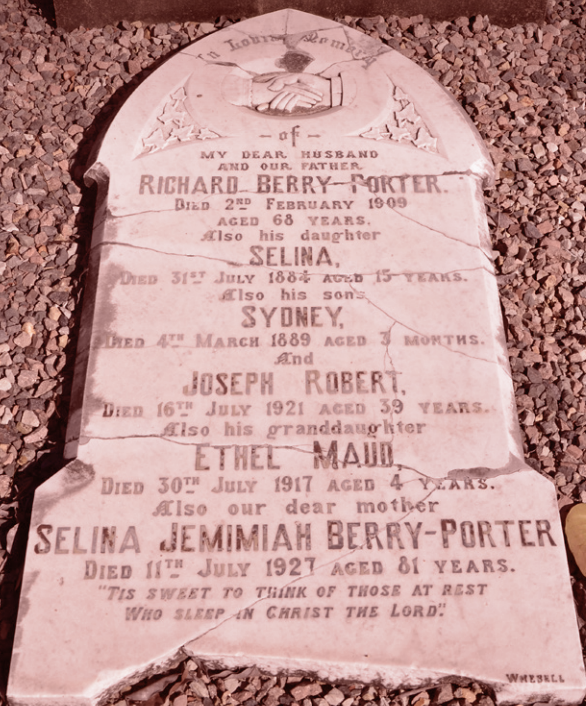
This headstone marks the grave of Selina Porter who died in 1884 at the age of 15.

Disease was a constant presence in the early years of Townsville's settlement with unsanitary living conditions meaning that food and drink could become infected with life-threatening bacteria. Selina Porter was one such victim of infection, dying of typhoid shortly after arriving in Townsville with her family.

The Porter family had sailed to Australia on the Carona in March 1882. On their arrival in Townsville, the family lived in the immigration depot on Ross Island. At this time the Victoria Bridge was not constructed, and so to travel to the developing city centre the family would have paid a penny to cross the creek by boat. After release from the immigration depot the family lived in a house in Stanley Street opposite Castle Hill Road. The house was initially purchased by Selina's father from a site near the former Townsville General Hospital and relocated to Stanley Street.

The grave also contains the burials of other family members.

Grave of Selina Porter





Grave of Hannah Sarah Pengelly

2 HANNAH SARAH PENGELLY

(1873-1940)

Hannah Sarah Pengelly was the Matron in charge of the Townsville North State School (now Belgian Gardens State School) isolation hospital during the 1919 influenza epidemic.

After World War I an epidemic of pneumonic influenza swept across the world. Spread via the shipping routes, Townsville's first reported cases were two passengers from the SS Wodonga. Townsville was spared the worst of the epidemic, with only 18 deaths even though 25% of the population were believed to have been infected.

In 1919 the State Government delegated responsibility for the epidemic to Townsville City Council. In June 1919 a special committee was formed containing representatives from Townsville City Council and Thuringowa Shire to handle the crisis. The city's streets were disinfected, information leaflets distributed and strict rules were imposed on the population, including a ban on public gatherings.

To accommodate the influx of patients, isolation hospitals were established in local schools. Matron Pengelly worked with the assistance of a voluntary aid detachment of nurses supplied by the Red Cross Society. Tents were set up in the grounds of Townsville North State School and local scouts were delegated to walk the street looking for windows marked "SOS" which indicated that the residents of the house were stricken with the virus. Arrangement would then be made to relocate the infected person to the isolation hospital.

Of the 195 patients hospitalised, six died. By September 1919 the crisis was over, the special committee disbanded, and the hospital equipment was sold.

ESTHER KETURAH CAMP

(MILGATE) (1831-1914)

Esther Keturah Milgate married George Henry Camp in Sydney in 1851. In 1869 they travelled to Townsville with their ten children.

At the time of their arrival, Townsville was relatively undeveloped. The family arrived in Cleveland Bay by steamer and were transported to the wharf via rowing boats. The town was surrounded by bushland with just a few shops and houses in Flinders Street and Melton Hill areas. George Camp, who was a wheelwright and blacksmith by trade, established a business in German Gardens (Belgian Gardens), where the family settled. Two of their sons, George Henry junior and Hezekiah followed their father into the family trade. Two more daughters were born to Esther and George in Townsville.

Esther was a deeply religious woman who, along with her husband, was a diligent worker for the Methodist Church for many years. In 1878, Esther and other ladies organised the first Sunday School picnic held at the Sports Ground, North Ward. Esther was known as a very good singer, a loving wife and a devoted mother.



*Grave of Esther
Keturah Camp*





Grave of Janet Hay Burgess

4 JANET HAY BURGESS

(1856-1920)

Janet Hay Burgess arrived in Townsville from Leith, Scotland, aboard the Eastern Monarch in 1883 with her husband James. Measles broke out on the voyage and the ship was quarantined on their arrival at Cleveland Bay. Two of their young children died from measles while in quarantine and were buried on Magnetic Island.

Janet died at the age of 64, leaving a husband, three sons and a daughter. The wide respect held for Janet by the Townsville community was evident in the large attendance at her funeral and the enormous number of floral tributes.

5 MARY KELSO

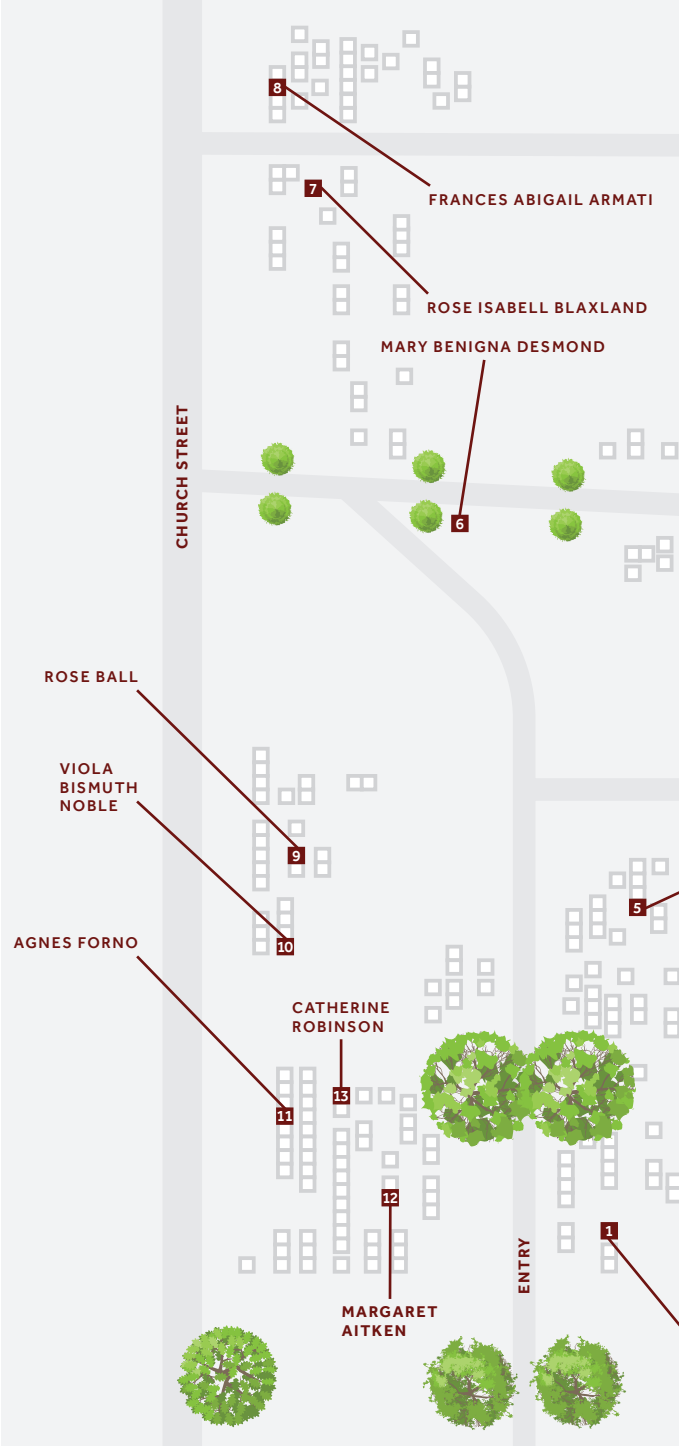
(COOPER) (1841-1924)

Mary Cooper married James Kelso in Glasgow in 1870. In 1874 they sailed to Australia with their young daughter Margaret. The family moved to Townsville in 1876 and were among the first settlers on the upper Ross River. They established a property called 'Laudham Park' in 1878, which was located a couple of miles from the junction of Five Head Creek and the Ross River. The Kelsos stocked the property with shorthorn cattle. In the early years while James supported the family by carrying goods to nearby mining settlements and breeding draught and saddle horses for the Indian army, Mary made jams and butters which she sold to the local residents.

James died in 1895 and Mary died in 1924, aged 83. The property remained in the family until the Ross River Dam was constructed in the 1970s.



Grave of Mary Kelso



8

FRANCES ABIGAIL ARMATI

7

ROSE ISABELL BLAXLAND

MARY BENIGNA DESMOND

6

CHURCH STREET

ROSE BALL

VIOLA
BISMUTH
NOBLE

9

AGNES FORNO

10

CATHERINE
ROBINSON

13

11

12

MARGARET
AITKEN

ENTRY

5

1



6 MARY BENIGNA DESMOND

(1837-1921)

Following the withdrawal of the Sisters of Saint Joseph from Townsville in 1878, the Sisters of Mercy were requested to replace them. An Irish order, the Sisters immediately became involved in caring for Townsville's sick and poor, showing determination and courage to establish order in the north. In 1901 the Sisters of Mercy became a self governing group and a congregation in its own right, with Mother Mary Benigna Desmond appointed the first Mother Superior.

The Sisters continue to make significant contributions to the North Queensland community, through their education ministry at St Patrick's, their work at the Mater Hospital where they offer counselling and support services, and through their aged care at the Loreto Nursing Home and Villa McAuley Retirement Village.



Grave of Mary Desmond

7 ROSE ISABELL BLAXLAND

(PICK) (C.1854-1942)

Rose Isabell Pick was born in Kent, England, in 1854, arriving in Brisbane in 1874. While in Brisbane she worked at the Lady Bowen hospital and obtained her certificate as a midwife. Arriving in Townsville in 1884, Rose practised as a midwife travelling to outlying areas by stage coach.

Rose married Colonel G.G. Blaxland of the Kennedy Regiment in Cairns in 1899. After her marriage, Rose continued to practice as a midwife with many women staying with her in the days leading up to the birth of their children. On her death in 1942, the Bulletin reported that "Many a mother can testify to her unswerving devotion to duty and her gentle and tender kindness."



Grave of Rose Blaxland

(NORRIS) (1853-1931)

Frances Norris was born in Chelsea, England, in 1853. In 1863, Frances travelled to Australia with her family settling in Queensland. Frances married Pio Vico Armati, a leading chemist in Townsville, on 8 June 1876.

Around the turn of the century Frances and her husband built 'The Palms' at 23 Hale Street, Stanton Hill. The Armatis were leading citizens, supporting many causes for the advancement of North Queensland. Frances played an active part in Townsville's social scene of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Newspapers of the time noted her elegant style of dress. Her grandson Leo Vivian Armati remembers her as a "very attractive lady, who was very regal in her carriage".

In addition to her social activities, Frances raised four sons and a daughter. She continued to live in the family home after the death of her husband. At the time of her death she was living in Sydney, but her ashes were later returned to Townsville to be interred in her husband's grave in the West End Cemetery.



9 ROSE BALL

(O'REILLY)
(C. 1842-1925)

Rose O'Reilly married Edward (Dan) O'Neill, the licensee of the Racecourse Hotel at German Gardens (Belgian Gardens), in Townsville in 1871. The couple had two children before Edward's untimely death in 1872.

Following Edward's passing, Rose took up the licence and transferred it to the Exchange Hotel in Flinders Street East in 1873. Under her management, the Exchange Hotel became a favourite with Townsville's citizens, almost doubling in size.

In 1877 Rose married Andrew Ball, one of the first men to discover the site of Townsville. Andrew Ball took over the licence and together they increased the popularity of the hotel, undertaking a number of renovations and extensions. In 1881 the Exchange Hotel and many of the surrounding buildings were destroyed by fire. The Balls rebuilt the hotel, re-opening it in 1882.

From 1882 the Balls leased the Exchange Hotel to others but remained active in Townsville's development. In 1886 they built a house at 21 Lawson Street Mysterion, naming it 'Rosebank'. Rosebank was known for the beauty of its gardens, with Andrew Ball planting an avenue of mango trees leading to the house. The house and two of the original mango trees still survive.

During the depression of the 1890s, Rose managed to hold onto Rosebank. Even after her husband's death in 1894, she continued to maintain the property. She sold the property to her son-in-law when her daughter Alice married in 1912 and remained at Rosebank until her death in 1925, aged 85 years.



Grave of Rose Ball

54. "Rosebank", Townsville.



"Rosebank" c. 1900

10 VIOLA BISMUTH NOBLE

(1906-1922)

The sorrow of losing a child is poignantly expressed by this elaborate monument.

Viola Bismuth Noble was the only daughter of Mr and Mrs R.H. Noble, who lived in Morehead Street, South Townsville. Enrolled at the Ross Island State School in 1912, Viola died in 1922 of kidney disease. An interesting feature of the monument is that only the mother, J.E. Noble, is recorded.



Grave of Viola Noble

11 AGNES FORNO

(CARSON) (1883-1956)

Agnes Carson was born in Queensland on 27 May 1883. In 1901, she married Domenico Charles Forno, a miner, in Ravenswood.

Agnes and Domenico had 12 children, 11 boys and one girl, with all but two born in Ravenswood. Their grandson relates how the children had to walk five miles to attend school in Ravenswood. On one occasion they were chased by dingoes and took shelter in a tree until evening when their father found them.

The family moved to Townsville in the early twentieth century. Agnes is remembered by her grandson as a good cook who was always in the kitchen.



Grave of Agnes Forno

13 MARGARET AITKEN

(STOREY) (1824-1897)

After living in Australia for a number of years, Thomas Aitken returned to Scotland and married Margaret Storey.

Returning to Australia, the Aitkens were engaged in dairy farming near Brisbane. In 1867 they moved to Townsville and took up 3,500 acres of land around the Ross River, where they established a dairy farm, calling the property Aitkenvale Estate. Later during the land boom, they sold all but 30 acres of the land, with the suburb of Aitkenvale developing in this area.

Highly respected in the community, Thomas and Margaret had five daughters and one son. Margaret died in March 1897 at the age of 73, with Thomas dying later that same year.



Grave of Margaret Aitken

12 CATHERINE ROBINSON

(COLVIN) (1838-1934)

Catherine Colvin arrived in Townsville on the SS Policeman in 1865. One of Townsville's first barmaids, Catherine was specifically brought to the city for the opening of the first Criterion Hotel.

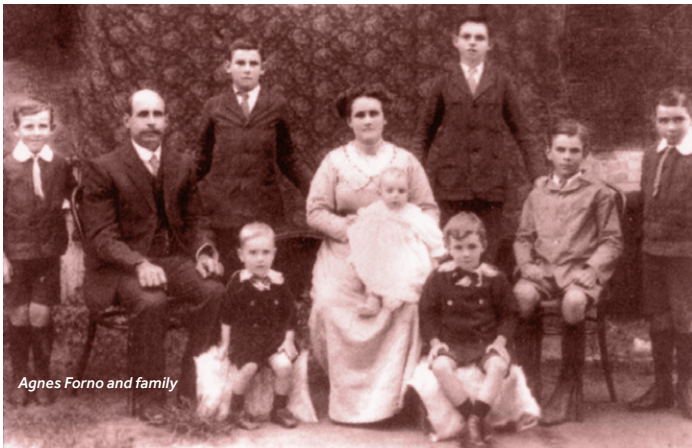
In 1865 when Robert Towns visited Townsville a picnic was organised at Magnetic Island in his honour. Catherine and a number of other women were invited to the picnic. Catherine was the first white woman to set foot on the Island after straws were drawn to see who would have the privilege of being carried ashore first.

Catherine married a German immigrant, Heinrick Fredrich Rubinstein (later known as Robinson). Together they started a vineyard at Kissing Point but were unsuccessful. They moved into dairy farming at German Gardens (Belgian Gardens) and moved to Mount St. John where they did well from the land sale boom. The Robinsons owned a number of properties in Townsville, including houses on Bundock Street, The Causeway and the lower end of Ingham Road where it meets Flinders Street West.

Catherine's son John was a well known local entrepreneur and promoter, responsible for Australia's first Bull Fight being held in Townsville. Catherine Robinson died in 1934 at the age of 95.



Grave of Catherine Robinson



Agnes Forno and family



The conservation of the West End Cemetery is a long-term project supported by Townsville City Council and the National Trust of Queensland. Several volunteers repair and restore monuments and infrastructure in the cemetery grounds and have made major contributions to the conservation of this important heritage site.

You can contribute to the conservation of the West End Cemetery by assisting the volunteers that work at the cemetery. For more information contact Council on 13 48 10 or visit townsville.qld.gov.au.



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