

Colonel Samuel Wensley Blackall

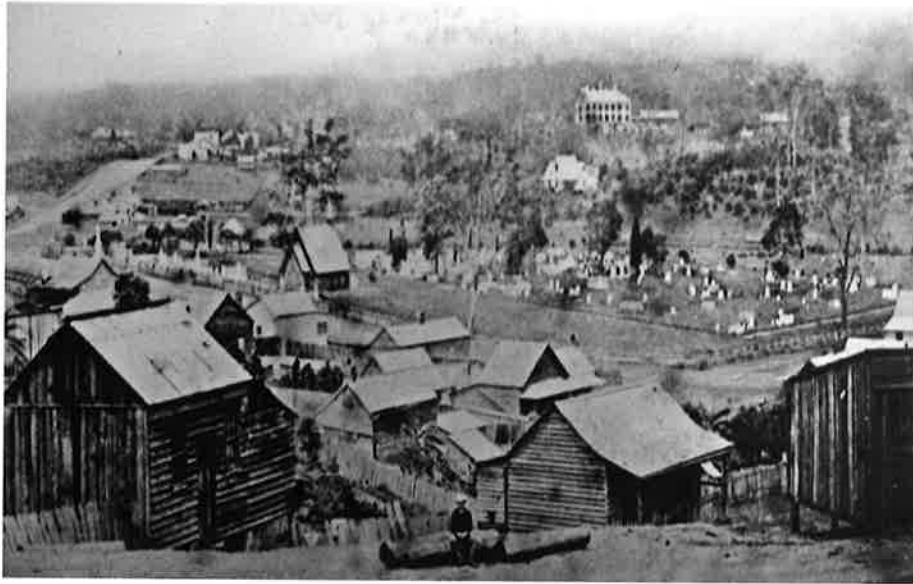


1809-1871

THE BIRTH OF A CEMETERY

Brisbane had three burial grounds prior to the establishment of the Brisbane General Cemetery at Toowong. One was in the area bounded by Skew Street, Eagle Terrace and Roma Street dating from convict era, 1825, until the institution of free settlement in Brisbane in 1842. In the same period, three children from non-convict families were buried in a separate enclosure on the north bank of the Brisbane River.

It was decided that a more suitable ground on the outskirts of the town adjacent to Milton and Paddington be selected to protect the growing town from disease. It was here that Brisbane's third burial ground was created, with a reserve allocated to each of seven religious denominations. Collectively, these were known as the North Brisbane Burial Ground and opened with the first interment in 1843.



Here also became a problem; it was not fifteen years later that health concerns as well as complaints from odour and seepage from the low lying ground arose. Shortly after in 1861 it was decided that a permanent solution should be sought.

Two hundred acres was set aside in the area now known as Toowong. Debate was still raging because the site chosen was so far away from the town in the middle of the bush. It wasn't until 1866 that the land was officially designated for cemetery purposes.

This was the beginning of the end for the North Brisbane Burial Ground and the advent of the Toowong Cemetery. In 1868, fifty-three more acres were added to the designated cemetery reserve fulfilling the requirement that the cemetery be surrounded completely by public roads. At an area of 250 acres and it was much larger than its predecessor.

It wasn't however until October of 1870 that the cemetery at Toowong was officially gazetted and the cemetery trust was established. The cemetery trust, made up of many of Brisbane's elite businessmen and political figures, had great say over the construction of the cemetery. In December of 1870 trial sinkings were made in the grounds which determined that the area was entirely unsuitable for burials and that other sites should be at once considered. Governor Samuel Wensley Blackall, a supporter of the cemetery being moved to Toowong, made a decision to force the hand of the Trust once and for all.

On the 30th of December 1870, Governor Blackall called to his office a long-time friend and colleague Mr. Charles Lilley (later knighted in 1881) to set a few things straight that had been bothering him. It was toward the end of their conversation that Governor Blackall stated the following:

"I wish to be buried on the highest part of the new cemetery, and to have such a funeral as all people, even the humblest, can follow if they wish to do so."

Sadly, at 11am on Tuesday 2nd of January 1871 Governor Samuel Wensley Blackall died, thus becoming the first interment at the Toowong Cemetery.

To mark the 140th anniversary of the first year of operation of the Brisbane General Cemetery, now universally known as the Toowong Cemetery, the cortege and interment of Governor Blackall was re-enacted.

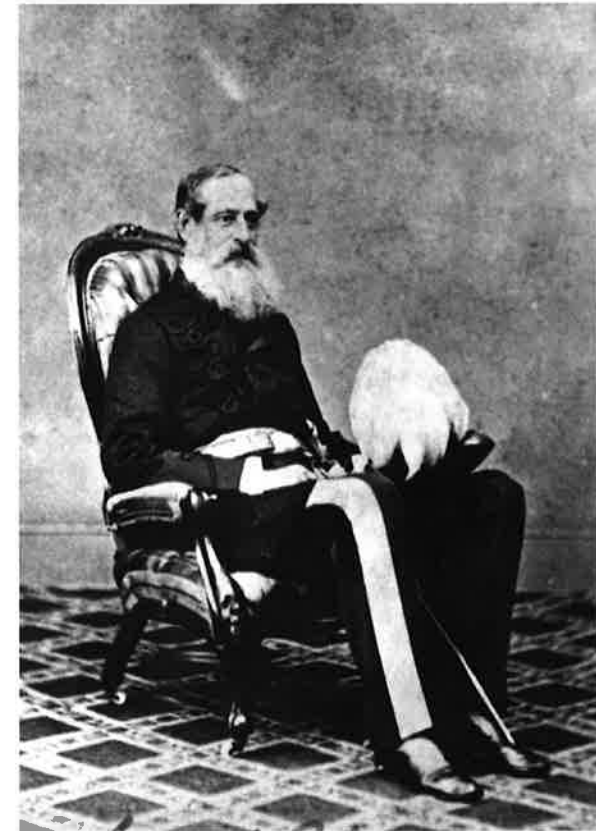
GOVERNOR BLACKALL

Samuel Wensley Blackall, was born on 1 May 1809 in Dublin, son of Major Robert Blackall of the East India Co. army, and his wife Catherine, née Lewis. A member of a prosperous Irish family, he was educated by a private tutor and at 15 went to Trinity College, Dublin, but did not graduate. He joined the 85th Regiment in June 1827 but in 1833 he sold his commission as lieutenant and entered the Royal Longford Militia, where he became a major. In 1833 he married Catherine Bowles in London and in 1848 Catherine Bond at Dublin; his second wife died in 1864, predeceased by their two children.

Blackall took an active part in Irish public life, becoming High Sheriff of County Longford in 1833: in 1847-51 he represented Longford in the House of Commons, and in 1861 became High Sheriff of Tyrone. Meanwhile he had been lieutenant-governor of Dominica in 1851-57. Through seeking to rule with a high hand he had to combat a petition for his recall. He was also in trouble with the Colonial Office for extending his leave because of family difficulties. In 1862 he re-entered the colonial service as governor of Sierra Leone, in 1865 became governor in chief at the West African Settlements and in 1868 was appointed governor of Queensland.

On arrival in Brisbane on the 14th of August 1868 Blackall was met by a tremendous popular welcome, but at once was plunged into a constitutional crisis, which had been temporarily held in check by the administrator, Sir Maurice O'Connell. After a deadlock in the Legislative Assembly the Liberals had been defeated in an election but were petitioning the governor to dissolve the assembly on the ground that it did not properly represent the colony. Perhaps because of his experience in Dominica or because his health had suffered in West Africa, Blackall pursued a strictly constitutional course and refused to intervene directly. The crisis did not end until the rule of his successor, the marquis of Normanby. Despite the bitterness of the constitutional battle Blackall made no personal enemies, though he had to face a few personal attacks. Kindly and soft-spoken, he had developed the gift of making friends and became very popular. Willing to assist any genuine public cause, he made frequent appearances on public platforms. He worked hard to improve agriculture and to link the Queensland grammar schools with the University of Sydney.

By 1870 Blackall's health was failing rapidly and he knew the end was near. In October, when the government decided to set aside a new cemetery reserve at Toowong he inspected the area and selected the highest spot for his grave. At the same time he requested that his funeral be such as could be attended by even the humblest. Three months later, on 2 January 1871, he died and his wishes were gratified. A fine memorial was erected over his grave, the first in the cemetery. His memory is also preserved by the town of Blackall, the Blackall Range, and the first Queensland government steamer, *Governor Blackall*, bought by Charles Lilley when premier in 1870.



FUNERAL OF THE LATE GOVERNOR.

From the pages of the *Brisbane Courier*

If any proof were required of the respect and affection in which His Excellency the late Governor was held by all classes of his fellow townsmen, his funeral yesterday would have borne ample testimony of the fact. We can safely say that never before in Queensland did such a concourse of people assemble for any purpose, as that which met either to take part in, or witness the funeral cortege of our late lamented Governor, Colonel Blackall. The city and suburbs literally turned out to pay fittingly their last sad tribute of respect to one for whom, in life, all had so sincere a regard, and between those in the procession and the spectators there could not have been less than 12,000 people along the line of the cortège. All the public offices were closed during the day, and all the shops had their shutters up in the forenoon. From one o'clock nearly all the warehouses were closed, and until after the funeral there may be said to have been a total suspension of business in the city.

The day was beautifully fine, and long before the hour appointed for the starting of the funeral procession the streets of the neighbourhood of Government House were crowded with foot passengers and vehicles of all kinds anxiously waiting for the signal of starting. The streets in the line of the procession were closed to general traffic by permission of the Mayor, from half-past 3 o'clock until the passing of the procession, and the precaution added greatly to the preservation of order, and prevented interruptions which would otherwise have occurred.

Nos. 1 and 3 Companies of the Q. V. Rifle Brigade mustered at their drill-rooms, to the number of seventy rank and file, at half-past 2 o'clock, and proceeded to Government House under the command of Captain Fowles, to form a firing party for the funeral. The late Volunteer Band also turned out to the number of twenty, in charge of Mr. James Dignan, and, considering the length of time since the band was disbanded, and the suddenness with which they were summoned, the members deserve great credit for the respectable appearance they presented, and the state of efficiency they displayed.

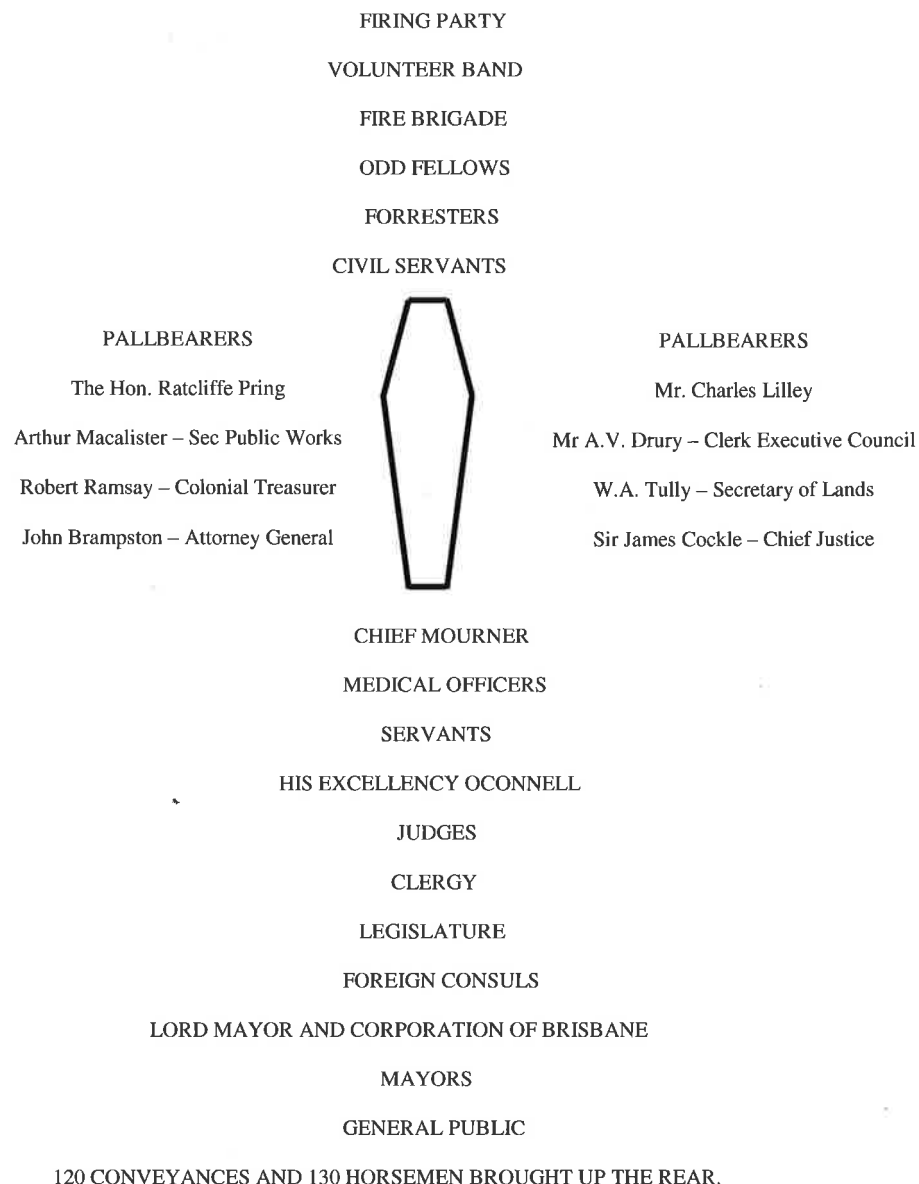
A detachment of No. 1 Battery Q.V.A. under the command of Lieutenant Webb, took up position at the Queen's Park Battery to fire a salute of 17 minute guns, commencing from the starting of the funeral from Government

House; while another detachment, under Lieutenant Geary, was dispatched to the new Cemetery to fire a similar salute over the grave. The arrangements as to the starting of the procession, which were announced in the Government Gazette Extraordinary of the previous day, were all strictly carried out. Exactly at 4 o'clock the body was borne out of the hall door of Government House and placed on the hearse, when the firing party who had been drawn up in front, presented arms, the flags at Government House, the Parliamentary Buildings, and the Observatory were lowered from half-mast, and at the same instant the first minute gun of the salute was fired from the Park battery.

The firing party then marched with reversed arms slowly down the avenue towards the gate, followed by the band, playing the "Dead March." Next came the undertaker, Mr. Geo. Petrie, who was followed by the following clerical gentlemen in a body: The Rev. E. Griffith, Congregational Church; the Rev. I. Harding, Wesleyan Church; the Revs. C. Ogg and M. McGravin, Presbyterian Church; and the Rev. I. P. Agnow, Free Church of England. After these came the medical attendants of His Late Excellency, Drs. Hobbs, Bell, and O'Doherty. Preceding the hearse were the Right Rev Dr. Tufnell, Anglican Bishop of Brisbane, with the officiating clergy in their vestments, the Revs. T. Jones, J. Sutton, J. Matthews, D. A. Court, R. Creyke, and J. R. Moffat. After the hearse, with the pall-bearers, came the chief mourner, Major Blackall, and the remainder of the procession as given below: The Civil service was represented by about 100 members from all departments, and the foreign consuls present were Mr. J. Wallace Barnett, U.S. Consul, and Mr. Rainmiger, Consul of the North German Confederation, the former in the uniform of his office. The Mayor and Corporation of Brisbane, were accompanied by Mr. Spiro, the Mayor of Toowoomba, and, we may mention among the other strangers present that the two companies of the Ipswich Volunteer force were represented by their officers, as were also the Ipswich branches of the Bank of Australasia, Joint Stock Bank, and Bank of New South Wales. The G.U. and M.U. orders of Odd fellows were largely represented, nearly 100 members being present, and the A.O. of Forrester's also mustered strongly.

The procession walked in order from Government House turning down Margaret-Street and up William-street to the Anglican Church of St. John's. The streets on the way were lined with immense crowds of people, and the procession itself, before reaching St. John's, could not have numbered less than 4000 persons. Perfect order, however, prevailed, and owing to the admirable arrangements of the police under Mr. Seymour, the Commissioner, not a hitch occurred. When the cortège arrived at St. John's, the doors of the church were opened and the body was carried in. The edifice was soon crowded to excess, and the burial service was conducted by Bishop Tufnell, assisted by the Rev. Mr. Sutton.

On leaving the church the procession moved onwards in the following order



The cemetery was reached shortly before 7 o'clock. The spot selected by his late Excellency as the site for his grave is a very beautiful one, being situated on the top of the hill at the upper end of the cemetery, and commanding an extensive view. A pathway had been cleared to the grave, on the right of which were posted the members of the "Volunteer Artillery with three field pieces. The Volunteer Rifles and the brethren of the friendly societies spread out in the form of a circle on arriving at the ground, and the funeral service was read by the Rev. Dr. Tufnell, Bishop of Brisbane, assisted by the Revs. Jas. Matthews, J. Sutton, and several other clergymen of the Church of England. After the conclusion of the service the firing party fired three rounds over the grave in excellent time, and the artillery fired a salute of seventeen guns. This concluded the ceremony, and the assemblage returned to town.

THE MUSIC

During Blackall's cortege, the Volunteer Band played the Dead March from the oratorio *Saul*. In three acts, *Saul* was written by George Frideric Handel with a libretto by Charles Jennens. Taken from the 1st Book of Samuel, the story of *Saul* focuses on the first king of Israel's relationship with his eventual successor, David; one which turns from admiration to envy and hatred, ultimately leading to the downfall of the eponymous monarch. The work, which Handel began in 1738, includes the famous Dead March, a funeral anthem for *Saul* and his son Jonathan, and some of the composer's most dramatic choral pieces. *Saul* was first performed at the King's Theatre in London on the 16th of January 1739.

THE COFFIN

The coffin is a historically accurate reproduction of an 1870s coffin. It is covered in black velvet and design of decorative tack-work is based on a contemporary archaeological find.

AT THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

The Book of Common Prayer (1662)

When they come to the grave, while the corpse is made ready to be laid into the earth, the Priest shall say, or the Priest and Clerks shall sing:

MAN that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay.

In the midst of life we are in death: of whom may we seek for succour, but of thee, O Lord, who for our sins art justly displeased?

Yet, O Lord God most holy, O Lord most mighty, O holy and most merciful Saviour, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death. Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts; shut not thy merciful ears to our prayer; but spare us, Lord most holy, O God most mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, thou most worthy judge eternal, suffer us not, at our last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from thee.

Then, while the earth shall be cast upon the body by some standing by, the Priest shall say,

FORASMUCH as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear *brother* here departed, we therefore commit *his* body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.

Then shall be said or sung,

I HEARD a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, From henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: even so saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours.

*Then the Priest shall say,
Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.*

OUR Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil. Amen.

Priest

ALMIGHTY God, with whom do live the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord, and with whom the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity: We give thee hearty thanks, for that it hath pleased thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world; beseeching thee, that it may please thee, of thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect, and to hasten thy kingdom; that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of thy holy Name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in thy eternal and everlasting glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Collect

O MERCIFUL God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life; in whom whosoever believeth shall live, though he die; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in him, shall not die eternally; who also hath taught us, by his holy Apostle Saint Paul, not to be sorry, as men without hope, for them that sleep in him: We meekly beseech thee, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness; that, when we shall depart this life, we may rest in him, as our hope is this our brother doth; and that, at the general Resurrection in the last day, we may be found acceptable in thy sight; and receive that blessing, which thy well-beloved Son shall then pronounce to all that love and fear thee, saying, Come, ye blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world: Grant this, we beseech thee, O merciful Father, through Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Redeemer. Amen.

THE grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. Amen.

BLACKALL'S MONUMENT

Designed by F.D.G Stanley, Superintendent of Public Works, the monument has an overall height of 19.81metres (65 feet) from the base and was erected in three stages. The first stage was seven stone steps composed of stone from the Spring Hill Quarries. The remainder of the work with the exception of the shaft is from polished stone from the Murphy's Creek Quarry. The Shaft is of pink porphyry from Barker's Quarry. It is built in an early English or Gothic style. The main outline is a shaft surmounted by an octagonal pinnacle surrounded by clustered gables. Immediately below that is an open gallery supported in curved foliage with capitals. The base is surrounded by four large and four small gables the inner surface of which bears the inscription on a marble tablet. These four gables are supported by columns of Gladstone marble with curved capitals. The monument at its base has a diameter of 4.2 metres (14 feet) and at the termination of the steps 6.4 metres (21 feet). It was completed by September 1873, when an enterprising photographer, G. P. Wright, made copies of a photograph of the monument for sale in Queen Street.

The exact location of Governor Blackall's burial is not known. This monument, according to newspapers of the day, is erected *close* to the grave of Governor Blackall. This is perhaps due to the depth the foundations which would have been sunk in order to support a monument of this height.

Barker's Quarry

Jane and John Barker were married in 1859 in Brisbane. By the 1870s John Barker's occupation was listed in the Queensland Post Office Directory as a quarryman, ship-owner and contractor. John operated a quarry and wharf below the Bowen Terrace cliffs beside where the Story Bridge stands today. Stone from Barker's Quarry was used on ships as ballast and pink porphyry from this quarry was one of the materials used in the construction of the monument. The Barkers are buried in Portion 9 Section 39 Grave 4

Joshua Jeays – Murphy's Creek and Woogaroo Quarry

Born in Leicester, England in 1812, Joshua Jeays was trained as a carpenter. He married Sarah Edwyn in 1838 in Middlesex, England and had at least three children. The eldest Sarah Jane, married Sir Charles Lilley, later to become premier of Queensland. Jeays made his name in Brisbane as a builder, architect and stonemason. He was responsible for the construction of many Brisbane's iconic buildings including Old Government House, now in Queensland University of Technology's Gardens Point Campus.

Joshua and his wife Sarah Jane are buried just a short distance away down the hill in Portion 13 Section 62 Grave 13.

Lines on Re-Visiting the grave of Governor Blackall

Brisbane Courier 25th November 1871

*In the bright Australian forest, in an ever-Sabbath spot,
Reposeth one whose memory shall never be forgot;
Ex-Viceroy of fair Queensland; to all her people dear;
Albeit for his paternal aims, too brief was his career;
Beside his solitary grave erewhile I musing stood,
Thinking of him who lay below, so genial and so good;
And I said: Thou genial Greatheart, by all beloved and known,
'Twas never thy intention to lie up here alone!
But thoughtful for thy people, exemplary in death;
Nor willing longer that the dead should taint the Living's breath;
Thou, from you glutted graveyards, which long have had their fill,
Allured them to a Premier Rest – God's Acre on the hill;
A bright and ever beauteous spot and where, life's battle past,
A Lover of this lustrous land would choose to rest at last
Nor are though long lonely – Another grave is there,
Of one connected in our hearts with all that's bright and fair;
The Envoy for a season – to hungering hearts was prest,
Then wafted by the angels to the Bloomland of the Blest!
And equidistant now ye lie – e'en as ye did of late;
She in her lodge of roses, thou in thy hall of state,
Whence, amidst awe and wonder, with souls subdued and still,
They brought ye both; -then left, awhile, their Acre on the hill:-
Transfigured now to glory, like a garden in full bloom;
And disconnected as the stars from darksomeness or gloom.
Yet still, O florist father, that the spot to all thus be,
Bid wave o'er each immortals grave a bright and beauteous tree. **

S. G. Mee.

*A Poinciana Regis

SAMUEL GILL MEE

Compositor and Poet – *Brisbane Courier* and *Queenslander*

Samuel Mee was born at Northamptonshire, England, in 1819. At 14, he was apprenticed to a printer in his native town. After the term of his apprenticeship had expired, he was engaged by Messrs. Manning and Mason, of London. He arrived in Sydney aboard the *Merlin* on the 20th September 1852. One of his fellow-passengers was Henry Jordan, afterwards Agent-General in England for Queensland. Mee's first position was on the *Empire* then owned and edited by Sir Henry Parkes. After working here for some time he was seized with the prevailing gold fever, and early in 1853, in company with a shipmate, he started for the newly-discovered goldfield Tambaroora. He soon discovered, however, that he was unfitted for a gold digger's life, and went to Bathurst, and worked for a short time on the *Free Press*. He afterwards returned to Sydney where he obtained a position on the *Gazette*. However, he decided for a time to forsake the printing office, and accepted employment on Felton Station, then the property of Mr. A. Sandeman. He remained there six months, and was subsequently employed at Yandilla, Crow's Nest, and Calliungal. Later on he worked on the *Armidale Express*, and then returned to Sydney, but finding business slack in that city he decided to come to Brisbane. Shortly after arrival around 1860, he contacted T. W. Hill, then overseer of the *Moreton Bay Courier* (at that time published twice weekly), who at once gave him a job. For several years Mee worked on the night staff, but was afterwards appointed to a position on the *Queenslander*, on which paper he worked for the rest of his lengthy career. He regularly contributed poems to the newspapers he worked on.

Samuel Gill Mee worked up until a few weeks prior to his death, and in his obituary was referred to as the Oldest Compositor in the Commonwealth. He died aged 90 years and was buried in the Toowong Cemetery in November 1909.

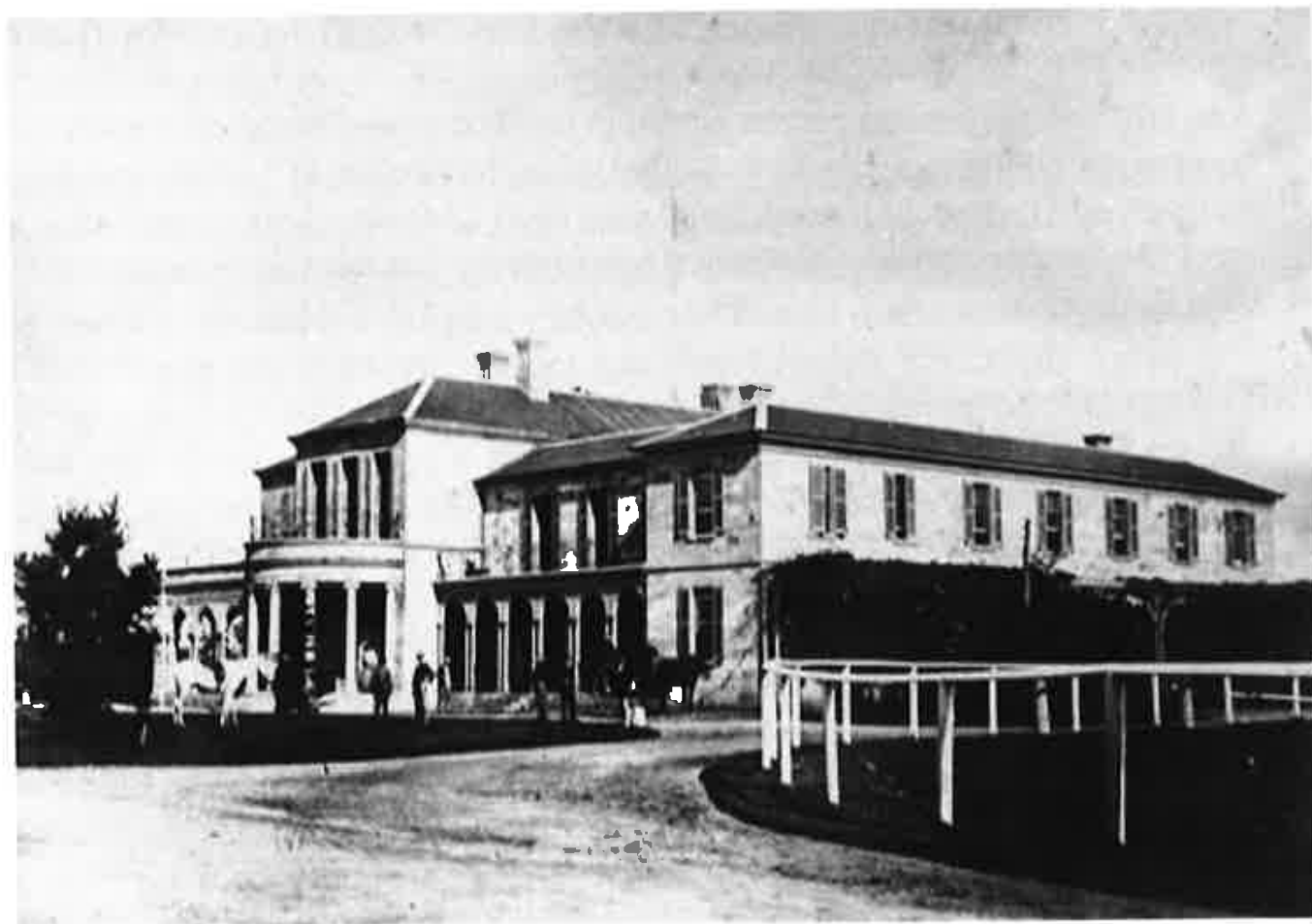
TOOWONG CEMETERY'S SECOND BURIAL

Ann Hill was the second person buried in the Toowong Cemetery, eleven months after Governor Blackall, on the 3rd of November 1871. She was the daughter of Walter and Jane Hill and died aged 21 from a lung complaint, most likely tuberculosis. The funeral left from the Curators' residence in the City Botanic Gardens.

The monument erected to her states:

**In Memory of Ann Hill,
The only beloved daughter of
Walter and Jane Hill
Botanic Gardens Brisbane.
Born 25th of April 1850
Died 1st November 1871
Forget her not,
She has gone to her grave when our
hopes were the strongest
For the sun of her beauty shed
light o'er the scene
O we mourn not the blossoms
that linger the longest
Like those that decay while
their branches are green.**

Walter Hill, the first curator of the Brisbane Botanic Garden, planted a Brisbane Pine *Araucaria cunninghamii* next to her grave. It still stands adjacent to the grave in Portion 6 Section 21 Grave 9.



Government House circa 1867

140th Anniversary Commemoration
Toowong Cemetery
24th July 2011

Friends of Toowong Cemetery
www.toowong.cemetery.org.au