

Cemetery at dead centre

SPRINGVALE'S CEMETERY HAS BEEN A FOCAL POINT FOR THE REGION FOR MORE THAN 113 YEARS. SOUTHERN METROPOLITAN CEMETERIES TRUST HISTORIAN AND CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGER DOCTOR CELESTINA SAGAZIO EXPLAINS THE SITE'S HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE.

THE Necropolis, Springvale - now Springvale Botanical Cemetery - which was opened in 1902, has played an important role in the Springvale and Dandenong district.

The Shire of Dandenong, within whose bounds the cemetery lay, was one of the municipalities that strongly advocated that the new metropolitan cemetery should be located in this district.

One of the original cemetery trustees was Charles James Jago, who was a highly respected resident of Springvale and a councillor of Dandenong Shire (he was Dandenong Mayor in 1901-'02).

Over the years, many thousands of citizens in the district were interred in the cemetery, including well-known identities.

The cemetery land was purchased in 1878 - the result of the vision of the radical parliamentarian Francis Longmore - but long-standing municipal jealousies and rivalries prevented the opening of the cemetery for another 24 years.

The new cemetery would replace the Melbourne General Cemetery in Carlton.

By the 1890s, inner-city cemeteries became ever-crowded with burials and there was a sustained push for a new burial ground in the eastern part of Melbourne.

Public meetings were convened at Dandenong and other localities to convince local politicians the merits of a Springvale cemetery.

Dandenong's South Bourke and Mornington Journal, the forerunner of the Dandenong Journal, spoke of the beauty of the Springvale site: "The contour of the ground is a gentle un-

dulating slope, which commands a fine view of Port Phillip Bay and the surrounding districts, and is so situated that it will be capable of any amount of ornamentation by landscape gardening and statuary, which can be shown off to great advantage."

Furthermore: "there is abundance of land adjoining should 300 acres not be sufficient ... which could at present be bought for a very reasonable sum".

By 1896 the original promoter of the Springvale cemetery site, Francis Longmore, was conveniently placed as parliamentarian for Dandenong and Berwick and pushed again for the establishment of the cemetery.

The Dandenong press was jubilant when the cemetery was given the go-ahead in 1901.

Some famous residents in the district are interred in Springvale Botanical Cemetery.

Sir John McEwen, who was Prime Minister for 23 days following the drowning death of Prime Minister Harold Holt in 1967, lived in Dandenong while young and attended local state schools.

His simple cremation memorial is placed under a rosebush and modestly makes no reference to his political office.

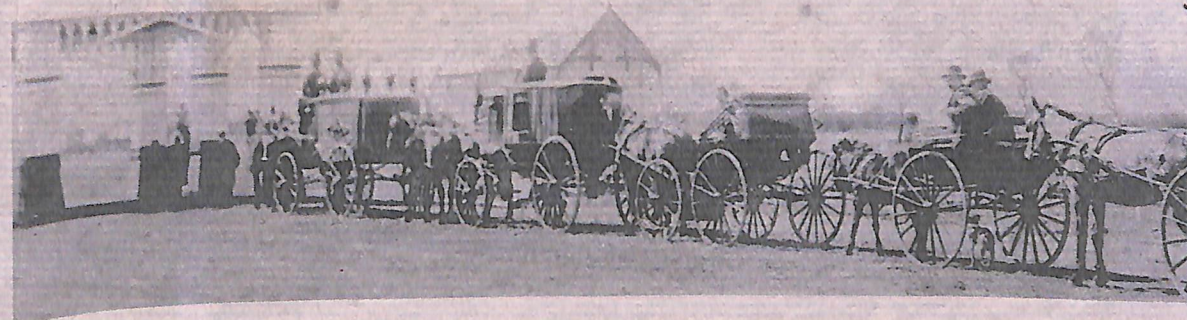
Percival Pavey, champion rifle shooter, joined the Oakleigh Rifle Club as a young man and his outstanding skill soon became evident.

He 16 times won the Grand Aggregate - the top prize in the sport - and was the only Australian to achieve this feat.

In 1948 he won the prestigious King's Trophy in England and was presented with his award by King George V.



Sisters Bronwen Sanneman and Patricia Mourant visit the grave of their fourth cousin and Springvale Cemetery's first burial, Clarence Reardon. 126886 Pictures: STEWART CHAMBERS



Clarence Reardon's funeral procession.

The front fence of his home in Oakleigh was made from the barrels of some of the many rifles he had used.

His epitaph includes the words "a much respected world famous rifleman".

Collingwood premiership footballer Darren Millane, who lived in Noble Park, was killed in a car accident on 7 October 1991.

Millane's funeral was held at the Dandenong Town Hall where it is es-

timated more than 5000 people attended, while the large crowd outside heard the service on a loudspeaker.

His cemetery monument is emblazoned with Collingwood emblems and his nickname, Pants.