
PRESTON GENERAL CEMETERY AND MAUSOLEUM



Plenty Road, Preston General Cemetery and Mausoleum



Preston General Cemetery Headstone Condition



Preston General Cemetery Figure 3

Location

900 PLENTY ROAD, BUNDOORA, DAREBIN CITY

Municipality

DAREBIN CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO188

Heritage Listing

Darebin City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

Preston General Cemetery, Plenty Road, Bundoora dates from 1864, when one acre of the Strathallan Estate was donated by McLean for a cemetery to be managed by cemetery trustees. It was called the Strathallan Cemetery. The earliest graves date from this era (1862 the earliest observed). Anecdotal evidence suggests the site may have been used as a burial ground by the McLean family from 1847. In 1928, the Strathallan Cemetery

was placed under the control of Preston City Council, officially opened in March 1934. Many improvements, including the fan and radial pathway layout and Monterey Cypress plantings date from this phase. The following elements contribute to the significance of the place:

- the nineteenth century and early twentieth century graves (including all the elements which make up the grave-headstone, footstone, grave marker, surrounding fence, orientation, etc.)
- the 1920-30s improvements by Preston Council, including the Monterey Cypress row, Juniper shrubs, and the fan and radial path layout
- the First and Second World War graves
- graves dating from post-WWII to the present (including all the elements which make up the grave-headstone, footstone, grave marker, surrounding fence, ornamentation, orientation, etc.); and
- the Olive and Italian Cypress trees.

Later additions, including the mausoleum, pathway and road surfaces, fence and gates are not significant.

How is it significant?

Preston General Cemetery, Plenty Road, Bundoora is of local historic significance to Darebin City.

Why is it significant?

Historically, Preston General Cemetery is significant as an early burial ground in Darebin in continuous use from 1864, displaying in the scale, variety, and modesty, and later elaborateness of its monuments and facilitates the values and changing attitudes towards death of the predominantly working class and increasingly multicultural community it has served. As a whole, it provides good documentation of the social and multicultural history of Darebin from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. (RNE criterion A.4)

In the range of memorials and types of monuments, plantings, and layout, Preston General Cemetery has representative significance for the important evidence of changing preferences and attitudes towards burial and death in Darebin, dictated by geographic origin, economic circumstances, fashion, and cultural preferences. (RNE criteria A.4, D.2)

Heritage Study/Consultant Darebin - Darebin Heritage Study, Context P/L, 2011;

Construction dates 1847, 1931,

Hermes Number 27120

Property Number

Physical Description 1

Location

Preston General Cemetery is located on a hill-side site on the southeast side of Plenty Road, Bundoora. The site slopes approximately down from northeast to southwest.

Layout and plantings

The earliest section of the cemetery at the northeast edge of the site is laid out in a simple grid pattern. There are spaces between small banks of nineteenth and early twentieth century graves which form paths, but no clearly discernable pathways or fabric remain. The graves are oriented southeast.

The most striking layout within the cemetery is the fan shaped layout pattern, that occupies the north western (Plenty Road) half of the site. The exact date of this radial fan layout is not known, but it was before 1945. It is formed by two concentric semicircular roads/feature paths linked by axial roads radiating from the entry in the centre of the Plenty Road boundary.

The layout and orientation of the nineteenth and early twentieth century graves is also important and remains largely intact, in spite of the condition of some of the graves. The fan layout radiating from the Plenty Road entry appears to remain largely intact, most likely laid out during the improvements undertaken in the late 1920s and early 1930s by Council, prior to the official opening in 1934.

The south eastern half of the site is laid out in simple straight lines and grid patterns.

The remainder of the cemetery is hard landscaped with planting not a major feature, with the exception of the row of Monterey Cypress that defines the cemetery's northeast boundary. In continual use since 1934, the promise of a 'glorious garden' has been replaced by a predominantly hard-edged landscape as paths, roads, graves, have been constructed, or where the landscape and plantings within the cemetery have not been maintained. The main vehicular thoroughfares have been recently re-bituminised with new concrete kerbs and guttering. Other pathways through the site are either concrete paths or unsealed informal routes.

The Monterey Cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) row forms a strong landscape element, particularly as it is on the elevated part of the site. Evergreens, particularly conifers were commonly planted in Melbourne cemeteries in the nineteenth century cemeteries in prominent locations such as driveways and boundaries (a symbolic choice). A 1945 aerial photograph confirms that an evergreen row or hedge formerly defined the west, south and east perimeters. This, and the maturity of the trees, suggests the remnant row is important as a relatively early planting, most likely dating from the late 1920s and early 1930s by Council in preparation for the official opening in 1934. A prostrate form of juniper (possibly *Juniperus communis*) also grows within some of the earlier grave plots. Juniper was a popular shrub found in cemetery plantings of this era. In some cases, the quite mature and gnarled specimens appear to be contributing to structural damage of these graves.

There are more recent plantings of olive (*Olea europea* subsp. *europea*) and Italian Cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*).

Memorials and structures

The earliest graves date from the mid nineteenth century. These stone and marble memorials (mostly upright headstones and graves enclosed with decorative wrought and cast iron grave surrounds), are clustered on the highest (northeast) part of the cemetery, arranged in a simple grid pattern. The earliest headstone observed dates from 1862 ('our Peter'). It stands within a cluster of other nineteenth century headstones; standing and fallen and of mixed condition ranging from fair to poor. Surrounding the nineteenth century graves are a group of fairly modest early twentieth century graves, again enclosed and with stone headstones. One headstone has a clay (terracotta?) insert with the inscription.

The lower, south areas of the cemetery, in the vicinity of the mausoleum, contain recent and relatively grand monuments. These are in good condition, reflecting a higher level of visitation and care by family and community members.

The earlier graves are dominated by Anglo-European family names. This begins to shift from the interwar period to a predominance of southern European names. Many graves in the inter-war and WWII period are modest stone (low alter style) military graves. Post-WWII changed the nature and composition of memorials, and saw the introduction of more lavish and heavily ornamented graves, photographic representations of the deceased on medallions and sometimes with religious statuary. These grave, in particular those from the late twentieth century to the present, are well kept and often decorated with plastic or real flowers.

The mausoleum located along the lower southwest boundary was opened in 1999. It was being extended when the site was visited in May 2008. The Plenty Road boundary palisade fence is new.

Condition

Generally, the graves in the earlier sections of the cemetery are in a fair to poor condition. The nineteenth and early twentieth century graves are in the poorest condition. Many headstones are tilting or fallen, cracked, inscriptions weathering. Decorative wrought and cast iron enclosures surround many of the nineteenth and early twentieth century graves. However, many of these elements are rusted, broken or missing. The current, generally poor condition of the graves in the earlier sections appears to be a result of the combined effects of natural weathering, ground movement, age, and lack of maintenance and repair.

The mid slopes of the cemetery are in fair to good condition. Mostly the monuments in these sections date from the 1930s and Second World War. They are simpler graves, with alter-style with low-lying horizontal or slightly

tilting head and foot stones. The fan layout radiating from the entry in the centre of the Plenty Road boundary retains high integrity.

The newest monuments occupy the lower slopes, in the southern corner of the cemetery and in the vicinity of the mausoleum. These graves appear well tended and visited by families and are in good to excellent condition.

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

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