

White Hills Cemetery - Bendigo

In recent decades there have appeared a great variety of detailed histories, many could come under the umbrella of a "Micro History". This work researched by Fiona Stanton straddles somewhere between a regular general history, genealogical study and a micro history.

Cemeteries can give us an insight into the social mores of a population in a given period, the attitude to life, death and those who wished to memorialise those who are deceased. A nineteenth century widow with a large family, almost destitute might spend the little money that had been raised for her in placing an expensive memorial upon her late husband's grave. What will happen to her and the children in the future when there was no social service safety net?

White Hills was really bustling in the 1850s, there were even thoughts to form a municipality centred upon the Seven White Hills. The rapid depletion of its initially rich gold resources prevented these civic aspirations of coming to fruition. The establishment of the cemetery near the Junction and in view of the hills which had made the area famous was a portion of the jigsaw which would make up this community. As the decline of the area took hold so the White Hills Cemetery suffered and was to become a far less desirable place to be interred as Fiona has pointed out.

Through the life of the early sextants and their responsibilities, particularly that of William Millar we can learn about life and death at the cemetery, and the surprisingly many rules and regulations that had to be adhered to. You can meet the trustees, drunkards, the thief, paupers, children, Chinese offering prayers, the grieving, those well known in their time, the visitors and the respectful, they are all there.

James A Lerk, September 2018