

## *Buried in the Bendigo Cemetery - Who were they?*

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### Memorials to the Galatea Tragedy (1867) Three Sandstone Obelisks.

When the Duke of Edinburgh's visited Sandhurst on 18th December 1867, a parade was planned in his honour. The Volunteer Fire Brigade's float based on the rigged ship *GALATEA* was the highlight but fireworks during the night and a 1000 torch procession saw tragedy when the *GALATEA* caught fire. Four boys were severely burnt and three died, each about nine years of age. They were buried in the cemetery and three identical stone obelisks were built by the citizens of Sandhurst.

Details of the ship HMS *GALATEA* and the Prince's Royal visit to Australia.

The three sandstone obelisks, of identical design and similar wording, mark the graves of the three boys.

- Sylvester Francis Cahill aged 9y 6m in section Mon G4

Other Cahill family details can be read [here](#).



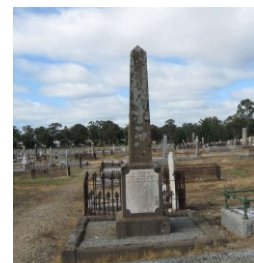
- John Langton McGrath aged 7y 6m in section Mon F4

Other McGrath family details can be read [here](#).



- Thomas Michael Walters aged 10y 2m in section Mon B2

Other Walters family details can be read [here](#).



Two of the graves are located in the Catholic area and one grave is in the Anglican Section in B2.

A mistake was made with the inscription after repairs were made to the headstone, and the name '**William Langton McGrath**' aged 9y 6m, was shown for John Langton McGrath's details. Other McGrath family details can be read here.

Source: From Monuments Australia

**Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Thu 19 Dec 1867 Page 3**

**THE TORCHLIGHT PROCESSION.**

To say that the demonstration on the part of the miners of the district was a great success would inadequately convey an idea of the brilliant display which took place when the torchbearers, marching down View Place and along Pall Mall, mustered in front of the Shamrock Hotel, in Williamson Street, and preceded by a band of music and many colored Chinese lanterns the bearers of torches formed a semi-circle in front of the window, where His Royal Highness speedily made his appearance. The grouping, however; did not allow of all who took part in the procession forming opposite to the hotel; a long line having to remain stationary in Pall Mall. The following address of the representatives of the mining community was graciously received by His Royal Highness amidst vociferations of loyalty and discharges of Roman candles and rockets:-

"To Alfred Ernest Albert, Duke of Edinburgh, K.G.

"May it please your Royal Highness,

"We the Miners of Bendigo, whilst partaking in the general joy and congratulations at the arrival of your Royal Highness in Australia, desire in welcoming your presence amongst us specially to express the gratification with which your Royal Highness' visit to this - one of the chief goldfields of the world - has impressed us, and to assure your Royal Highness of our loyalty and devotion to our Most Gracious Queen and country.

"In visiting some of the principal mines of the district your Royal Highness will have ample evidence of the nature and scope of our mining resources which have already poured forth a stream of wealth of surpassing magnitude, and which promise to be almost inexhaustible in their nature. While expressing a hope that the evidence of our mining progress will afford you gratification, we trust that the impressions formed by your Royal Highness whilst amongst us will be such as to induce you to remember with pleasure your visit to Bendigo.

"Signed on behalf of the miners of Bendigo,

T Ballerstedt, Chairman,

T Burrows, Treasurer,

H Hattim, Secretary."

The procession then circled round, and entering the Camp Reserve piled the torches into one general bonfire. This grand and unrivalled feature in the evening's

proceedings was specially noticed by the Duke and his party.

At this time the demonstration of the evening was marred by a sad incident, either owing to the fireworks or the careless use of the torches by some of the bearers, who waved them about in a manner extremely dangerous in such a crowd. The Volunteer Fire Brigade's rigged ship, which had formed a conspicuous object in the proceedings of the morning, was driven along the crowded thoroughfare, manned with young citizens dressed in sailor costume, and took fire either from the torches or the fireworks.

Some of the sails immediately caught fire, and before an escape could be made four of the occupants were most severely burnt. With the assistance of the bystanders the flames were quenched, but so severe were the injuries sustained by the lads that they had to be conveyed to the hospital, and although one of them was enabled to return to his parents' home, the other three still remain inmates of the institution. One of them, named Wm Langston M'Grath, about eight years of age, and a son of the proprietor of the Harp and Shamrock Hotel, at the corner of Hargreaves and Mundy streets, is in a very precarious condition, being severely burnt on the thighs and back, and face. Another, named Sylvester Francis Cahill, about nine years of age, had his legs, hands, and face much injured, and Thomas Walters, aged eleven, is badly burnt about the legs and thighs.

In the evening His Royal Highness entertained at dinner the gentlemen of his suite as well as His Excellency the Governor, the hon Elliot Yorke, Captain Macmahon, Lieutenant Ramsay, Mr M'Culloch, Mr M'Intyre (Mayor of Sandhurst). His Honor Judge Skinner, Mr M'Lachlan, P.M. Mr Warden Mollison, Mr Butters (Mayor of Melbourne), Messrs Burrowes, Sullivan, Casey, and others, numbering in all twenty two.

### **Details of the fire.**

**Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Fri 20 Dec 1867 Page 3**

#### **THE FATAL RESULT OF THE FIRE BRIGADE DEMONSTRATION.**

The melancholy result of the demonstration which was made by the Volunteer Fire Brigade on Wednesday night, has been the death of three poor boys, who were on the model ship, the Galatea, when the unfortunate explosion of the fireworks took place. Their names are M'Grath, Cahill, and Walters, the first named, the son of Mr M'Grath, of the Harp and Shamrock Hotel, Hargreaves Street, a lad of eight years of age; the second, the son of Mr Cahill, bootmaker, of Hargreaves Street, of about a similar age; and the third, the son of Mr Walters, laborer, Myers street, of a similar age. Since the accident occurred we have been able to ascertain the following particulars respecting the calamity. We are informed that the Brigade without waiting till the torch light demonstration had terminated, drove their model ship into the midst of the torch-bearers although a previous ignition of a portion of

the ship ought to have made them more cautious.

That, however, was no excuse for the manner in which those who composed part of the procession hurled the dying embers of their torches not only amongst the combustible materials known to be on board of the model ship but also recklessly near to the unfurled sails of the ship. The origin, however, of the flame which ensued the fatal disaster is said to be the throwing of crackers into the model, and as the assistant must be known to those who were accompanying him we trust that the miscreant's name will at once be disclosed. When the flame burst forth the courage and intrepidity of Mr Meagher (the captain of the Brigade) were particularly remarked, and also of Mr Hickey (one of the members) both of whom have sustained some severe injuries from the fire.

When the explosion took place Mr Meagher, although struck on the head by one of the rockets, simultaneously caught hold of several of the boys, who were helplessly standing near him, and literally dragged them out of the flames, and passed them over the side of the ship. Mr Irvin, a lame man, who was on board at the time, also rendered good service in saving some of the poor boys. The funeral of the boys will take place in the course of this afternoon, after the inquest on their bodies has been held. His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh had ever since the occurrence of the melancholy accident evinced great interest in their fate. At his special request, on being informed of the death of the first boy, M'Grath, all the flags throughout the town were hoisted half-mast high. At a late hour last night we ascertained that the fourth boy Brown (the son of Mr Brown, of Williamson Street), was in such a precarious condition that he was not expected to survive until morning.

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Compiled in December 2017 for the Bendigo Cemetery Project  
by Pat & Ian Belmont

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