

THE BENEFACTOR

John Joseph White (1832-1917) was born in England and brought his family to Australia c.1861.

He was a master mariner, as was his brother, and they both built ships and operated a very successful trading business between New Zealand and Australia.

White married Agnes Fairbairne Turnbull on 5 July 1859, however Agnes died on 3 November 1889 and was buried at Williamstown Cemetery.

Although he later remarried, to Mary Minty, White never forgot his first wife and he visited her grave often.

> In 1892, White donated £25 towards a fountain to be built in Agnes's memory.

When the cost was found to be higher the Trustees of Williamstown Cemetery donated funds to complete the works.

J.J. White was a generous local benefactor and also donated funds to build a new Women's Ward of the Williamstown Hospital, opened 1917, as well as funds for street plantings and other buildings in Footscray.

White died in 1917 and is buried with his first wife, Agnes. His obituary records him as being a "character" with strong opinions and wide interests.

FURTHER READING

Fiddian, M. *In the King's Name: a History of Williamstown*, 2013

Lemon, A. & Morgan, M. *Buried by the sea: a History of the Williamstown Cemetery*, 2005

Strahan, L. *At the Edge of the Centre: A History of Williamstown*, 1994

RESTORATION GRANT

The Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust gratefully acknowledges the support of Victoria's Heritage Restoration Fund and its grant of \$50,000 towards the restoration works.

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The Greater Metropolitan
Cemeteries Trust
Lasting memories, peaceful places.

WILLIAMSTOWN CEMETERY FOUNTAIN



HISTORY

In 1857, Crown Reserve RS5440 was set aside for cemetery land within a public park.

The view of the day was that cemeteries served a dual purpose; traditional and as a place for contemplative recreation, linked with the botanical park movement. As such, the design placed the cemetery at the very centre of the park.

- > Opened in 1858, Williamstown Cemetery is 11.4 hectares and has strong connections with the area's maritime history.

Many of the memorials reference a maritime theme and a connection to the sea and the families who lived and worked in local nautical industries.

The fountain takes pride of place in the entrance of this highly monumental cemetery.

WHY A FOUNTAIN?

A global symbol for life, the flowing waters of a fountain symbolise continuing energy and a connection with eternity. The source of the endless flow is unseen and infinite, drawing one into a mystical dimension. The bowl of the fountain is a sacred space, holding the waters of eternity.

Wells and springs are sacred places in many religions, bringing fertility and growth.

The Williamstown Cemetery Fountain brings a sense of peace and belonging to the cemetery grounds.

ARCHITECT

Wardrop and William Charles Scully were partners in a firm of architectural modelers who used the latest techniques to design fountain and other monumental pieces.

Their small firm was situated in North Melbourne and they successfully tendered for the Williamstown Fountain, for the grand sum of £55.

- > The Fountain was designed in a neo-baroque fashion and was adorned with garlands, cherubs, griffins, masks and baroque style dolphins.

The crowning feature, a cherub holding a small basin adorned the top of the fountain, but was unfortunately destroyed by high winds around 1907.

The Williamstown fountain by Waldrop, Scully and Co. was one of three identical sculptural fountains which the firm created for other properties in Victoria.

The others are located at Hamilton Botanic Gardens and the Ararat Town Hall.

RESTORATION

The fountain leaked from the very beginning and, over the years, many attempts were made to maintain its operation. Some of these attempts unfortunately led to further damage as the pressed concrete fountain was further affected by the introduction of other, incompatible materials. The road surface had also been raised several times which caused additional problems.

The Williamstown Cemetery Conservation Management Plan identified the fountain as having important and significant historical value and its contribution to the layout of the cemetery and its central position was fully recognised.

In 2016, The Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust commenced significant restoration works, committing \$340,000 to the project, generously supported by a \$50,000 grant from Victoria's Heritage Restoration Fund.

The restoration works commenced in July 2016 were completed in March 2017 at a total cost of \$390,000.

