Skinner Street Cemetery and the Church of England Registers

Information in this article from “Burial Records Appertaining to Alma Street & Skinner Street Cemeteries Fremantle from year 1831 onwards” compiled by Kate Caldwell.

Prior to 1831 burials are known to have taken place at Clarence, south of Fremantle, however, in 1831 the first cemetery in Alma Street was consecrated, although it was not until 1847 that it was officially allotted by proclamation. It met the needs of the community until the ‘new’ cemetery in Skinner Street was dedicated in 1852. In 1899 the current cemetery in Carrington Street was opened and Skinner Street Cemetery closed, although it was still possible to apply to the Governor for special permission for a burial.

Over the years neglect and vandalism took its toll on Skinner Street cemetery so much so that between 1931 and 1935, when the opportunity was offered, many Fremantle families relocated the headstones to either Karrakatta or Fremantle Cemeteries at a cost of five pounds, however, for the most part the actual graves were not disturbed. The cemetery site (covered by tons of soil) is now incorporated into the grounds of John Curtin High School, presumably the bones of many of our ancestors still lie beneath the playing fields.

Skinner Street cemetery was an inter-denominational cemetery with specific areas for each religion. The Roman Catholic Church has recorded the burials from 1852-1874, then there is a break until they resumed between 1887 and 1904. The Anglican Church records are from 1830-1875 (they include some burials at Clarence). Then there is a period for 22 years when no records were known to have been kept, they resumed in 1897 to 1905. It is thought the records of the Methodist church have been lost; there are no known records for any other denomination. By the Cemeteries Act of 1897 the government took control of all cemeteries in the Metropolitan area and established the registry of burials.

It was when looking at the Church of England records between 1850 and 1875 for the burial of Pensioners and their descendants that I noticed that as well as the name, burial date, age, profession or that of the father in the case of children, by whom buried but also the cause of death was noted. Between the 7 March and 17 April 1861 there were 6 deaths from measles, followed by an outbreak of enteric fever (typhoid) between 6 November 1874 and 3 January, 1875 which was the cause of death for 9 people. Influenza, atrophy, convulsions, consumption, colds and diarrhoea were always present together with accidents, drowning and suicides. The most bizarre was the treatment of a woman before burial recorded as “confined. On board ‘Sea Ripple’. Wife of captain was put in zinc case with rum, slung from cabin roof and so bought to harbour”.

Jeanette recorded the details of those entries marked pensioners: spellings and abbreviations as recorded:

Burial Date; Name; age; Cause of death; poss ship; Age; Profession etc

10 Jun 1850 Charles Watkins; 6 mths Atrophy; Scindian off Fremantle; Pensioner’s son
19 Feb 1851; John Skillen; 45; Self Strangulation in fit of insanity; Pensioner
9 Sept 1853; James Arthur; 3 wks; On board Robert Small, Pensioner’s Child
10 Sept 1853; John Brown; 13 Days On Board Phoebe Dunbar; Pensioner’s child
24 March 1854; Sarah Davenport; 2 yrs 4 mths; Pensioner’s Child
26 May 1854; Mary Jane Tubbs; 2 mths; Ship; Pensioner’s Dtr
22 Nov 1854; Frederick Jones; 1 yr 4 mths Infimtn
Chest; Pensioner’s son
19 Dec 1854; Job Bailey; 2; Dysentery; Pensioners’ son

Pensioner Barracks
22 March 1855; Eliza Inskip; 11 mths; Fever;
S. Maj Pens. Grd
30 March 1855; Ellen Inskip; 1 yr 11 mths; Chest
Inflammation; S. Maj. Pens. Grd
20 May 1855; Charles William Gane; 3 ½; Brain
Fever; Pens. son
6 July 1855; George Clack; 52; Fever; Pensioner

No entries 1855-1860 From 1860 the date is the
date of death
19 Jan 1862; William Sutcliffe; 1; Convulsions; Pens. son
5 April 1862; Abraham Cable; 18 mths; Son of Joseph Cable; Pens
24 July 1862; Mary Jane Yendall; 2 yrs; Fever; D. of Wm Yendall; Pens
3 Aug 1862; Elizabeth Yendall; 6 ½; Fever; D. of Wm Yendall; Pens
23 Aug 1862; John Broadhak; Phthisis; Pensioner
23 Sept 1862; Elizabeth Broadhak; 5 mths; Atrophy;
D. of Pens. J. Broadhak [Broomhall; Broadbrook]
29 Sept 1862; Child of Wm Yendall; Convulsions
11 Dec 1862; Lydia Nicholls; 15; Fever; D. of John N. Pens
30 May 1863; Mary Ann MacDonald; 2 yrs 9 mths;
Diarrhoea D. of Wm MacD; Pens.
1 July 1863; Mrs Chapman; Fever; Wife; Pensioner
11 June 1863; William Macdonald; 42; Suicide Shot
himself; Pensioner
10 Oct 1863; John Greer; 10 mos; Convulsions Son
of John & Sarah Greer; Pensioner
17 Oct 1863; Sarah Greer; 10 mos; Convulsions 
D. of J S Greer Twin of above
15 Nov 1863; Thomas Farrow; 44; Throat Disease;
Pensioner
23 Jan 1864; Walter Sutcliffe; 13 mths; Bronchitis;
Son Richard & Mary Sutcliffe; Pensioner
28 March 1864; Mary Ann Cunningham; 22;
Phthisis; D. of Pensioner
2 May 1864; William Sutton; 50; “Went silly,
worried in bush and found dead in waterhole”;
Pensioner
6 August 1864; William Kearns; 42; Choked by place
of meat; Pensioner
12 August 1864; Thomas Pike; Lockjaw; Pensioner
20 August 1864; Thomas William Lamb; 3 days;
Convulsions; S. of Thomas Lamb Pensioner
19 May 1865; Catherine McCready; 38; Head; of
Thomas McCready of N. Fremantle; Pensioner
5 Aug 1865; Samuel Cook; 10 mths; Teething & Cold;
son of North Fremantle; Pensioner
21 Feb 1866; John Farmer; 43; Found dead & burnt
by bush fire; Pensioner
23 July 1866; John Richardson; 42; Consumption;
Pensioner
30 July 1866; James Hay; Pensioner
6 Aug 1866; Eliza Galbraith; Pensioner
23 Aug 1867; Sarah Pickering; 36 hrs; Convulsions;
D. J. Pickering; Pensioner
7 Jan 1868; Robert Aldgate; 59; Hung himself in tree;
Pensioner
3 Mar 1868; Alfred Coffin; 3 wks; Convulsions son
Wm. Coffin 11th grave, 3rd plot from entrance gate;
Pensioner
17 May 1868; Edwin Bull; 48; Dysentery Acute; Died
Military Hospital; Left wife, 6 children; Pensioner
22 June 1868; William Joslin; 6 mths; Atrophy c;
Pensioner
9 Oct 1868; James Vagg; Infant son of Pensioner
17 Feb 1869; John Blr; 35; Asthma bk up Constitution
Single at Military Hospital Fremantle; Pensioner
31 Jul 1869; John McMullen; 29; Result of fall from a
horse 2 years ago and being stabbed in the side;
Farmer at Freshwater Bay; M dtr of Pensioner Efford.
20 Aug 1869; Christina Jones; abt 9 mths Infant;
Pensioner
30 Sept 1869; Edward Hussey; 67; Old Age; at N. 
Flt; Pensioner
10 Dec 1869; Lucy Harriet Pickering; Infant; Cold
etc; dtr of Pensioner
22 Jan 1870; John Taylor; Infant; Cold etc; s of
Pensioner
15 April 1870; Amos Ludlam; 9 mths; Dysentery &
Teething; Son of Pensioner
22 Aug 1870; Margaret Ann Turner; 18 mths-2 yrs;
Atrophy; D Pensioner
21 Nov 1870; Thomas Ludlam; 46; Gradual
Ailment; Pensioner on the Force.
3 Jan 1871; John Jones; 57 Dysentery & Weakness;
Pensioner & Warder
28 Feb 1871; Henry Garrish; 38; Rapid Consumption;
Pensioner
21 March 1871; Anne Wareham; Lingering disease; w
Pensioner
6 July 1871; Thomas Evans; Heart Disease;
Pensioner
16 Sept 1871; Richard Tierney; 72; Influenza & Old
Age; Pensioner Enrolled Force
24 March 1872; Henry Gandell; 50; Cold & Atrophy;
Pensioner
29 Oct 1872; Thomas Mellowes; Infant; Cold; S
Pens. Force
1 Jan 1873; Elizabeth Pickering, Babe; Cold; P.S.
Child
7 April 1874; Edward Osboume; 60 odd Age;
Pensioner - In District Registry name Osborne
22 July 1874; William Reuben Locke; 50; Drosy of
Heart; Sgt. Pensioner.
2 Nov 1874; George Cooper; 63; Pleurisy; Pensioner
15 Dec 1874; William Coffin; 54; Enteric Fever;
Pensioner
6 March 1875; Arthur Locke; Inf. 7 mths; Enteric
Fever S late; Pensioner Locke
31 July 1875 end of register resumes 4 March 1897
no cause of death given.