

## NUDGEE CEMETERY

*20 February 2007*

*David Molloy*

The Catholic Church became the largest single landowner within the Nudgee District when the area was surveyed and put up for sale in 1862. The Church's holdings extended all the way to Moreton Bay at what is now the suburb of Nudgee Beach. Under the sponsorship of Archbishop James Quinn, the Order of the Sisters of Mercy established St Vincent's Orphanage on 3,500 acres of land fronting Queens Road. As a result of the Orphanage's opening, a need arose for a site to bury any of its residents or staff. The Nudgee area also had a growing population of farmer families such as the Childs who established *Toombul Vineyards* in the district in 1866. Thus the need arose for a community cemetery.

The land that is the site of Nudgee Cemetery, was bought by James Keatinge of Brisbane, on 8 September 1863. Keatinge paid £18 for 18 acres of former crown land described as Portion 236 in the Parish of Toombul. On the same day he paid the same price for the 18 acres contained in Portion 235 and £19:16 for the 18 acres in Portion 234. It is presumed that Keatinge was acting on behalf of the Catholic Church, for he transferred ownership of all of this land to Archbishop Quinn, on 2 October 1863.

This 54-acre site though covering three subdivisions of farmland was unsuitable for any purpose other than grazing, as it was subject to flooding from the nearby Nudgee Waterholes.

The site, situated down the hill from the Orphanage, was allotted as a cemetery site by the Catholic Church, with the Archbishop acting as trustee of the property.

Then in 1867, Bernard McHugh became the first person to be interred in the new Nudgee Cemetery.

Bernard McHugh (born c.1808) with his wife Ann (nee Kilbride) arrived in Sydney from Ireland on 20th May 1839 aboard the vessel *Formosa*. He went farming at Crookhaven in the Illawarra District. In 1862 he purchased 54 acres on the Logan River, Qld. At the time of his accidental death in 1867 he was an established dairy farmer adjacent to the Nudgee Water Hole.

On the morning of 8th June 1867 Bernard set out riding to Brisbane on business. When it was after teatime and he had not returned home, his wife sent out the German farm labourer to meet him.

About a mile from home the man found Bernard lying on the ground. His head had struck a thick overhanging branch in the dark and he had fallen from his horse. He was unable to move and complained of a headache and numbness from the neck down. With assistance he was brought home by cart and put to bed. Mrs McHugh thought it unnecessary to call a priest or doctor as she thought the numbness resulted from lying so long on the cold ground.

He was obviously suffering from serious spinal damage, because at 5 am the next morning when his wife attempted to prop him up to drink some tea, he fell back dead.

Bernard McHugh's gravestone shows 'Died 8th June 1867 Aged 51 years'. Inquest and Death Certificate shows '9th June 1868 Aged 60 years'. Bernard's wife Ann and married daughter Mary Ann Thornhill are also interred here.

While the cemetery was owned and operated by the Catholic Church, persons from any denomination could be buried on the site, provided permission from the Archbishop was granted.

Nudgee Cemetery, as the first Catholic Cemetery in Brisbane, became the chosen burial ground for many people; especially Irish immigrants who lived outside the district. Access to the Cemetery was facilitated by the opening of the Sandgate railway on 11 May 1882. The rail line led to the building of a station and goods shed that not only allowed local produce to be sent to Brisbane markets but also allowed coffins to be transported out to Nudgee. Such was the popularity of Nudgee Cemetery as a burial site that Timothy Wrafter moved to the farming district and established a monumental works there in the 1890s. Many of the surviving early gravestones in the cemetery were made by the firm T. Wrafter & Sons that is still in business today.

When Archbishop Quinn died on 18 August 1881, the cemetery site passed to the trustees of his will, James and Matthew Quinn. On 22 February 1897, the cemetery came under the control of Archbishop Robert Dunne. He leased the site, probably for grazing purposes, to farmers Henry Walton Robinson and Joseph Kreutzer on 13 May 1898. The lease not only brought an income of £30 per year to the Church but also would have provided a means to control the

growth of grass and weeds within the cemetery. The lease was extended on 25 June 1904 with the rental being £36 per annum.

By the 1980s, Nudgee Cemetery was maintained/managed by K M Smith funeral directors, who acted on behalf of the Church. Currently the Cemetery is operated by the Corporation of the Trustees of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane.

Among notable citizens of Brisbane who are buried at Nudgee Cemetery are the department store owner, T C Beirne, former Managing Director of Castlemaine Perkins, George Wilkie Gray, controversial Premier of Queensland and founder of the Democratic Labor Party, Vince Gair, Australia's yodelling cowgirl, June Holm, and Olympian, Hector Hogan. Members of religious orders are also buried at Nudgee in their respective areas.

Other folk buried at Nudgee may not be notable to the community, however they are more than notable to their families as shown by this wording on some gravestones:

*To the world he was just one, to us he was the world.*

Common epitaphs were:

- *Requiescat in Pace*
- *Rest in Peace*
- *Sacred to the Memory*
- *In Loving Memory*
- *Forever in our hearts*

What is the population of Nudgee Cemetery?

The Cemetery has approximately 30,000 burial sites at this time, some of which are not yet occupied. My understanding is that the owners of these sites are in no real hurry to move in.

In the following table, the increasing numbers are directly related to population.

**BURIAL CASE NUMBERS**  
(Shown in ten year periods.)

1800s	366
1900s	291
1910s	422
1920s	817
1930s	1090
1940s	1649
1950s	3193
1960s	5062
1970s	3969
1980s	2928
1990s	2998
2000s	1928

The general rule to the number of funerals is 1% of the population per year. This figure has reduced in the last ten years, as we are now living longer.

It is likely that this figure will rise in the next ten years.

Why?

During the last ten years funeral numbers have been limited by history. If we had not lost our soldiers during the war, it is likely that they would have died of another cause during this time. Australia had a population boom just after the war with the aptly named baby boomers. We all know that we cannot live forever and the baby boomers will contribute to the increased number of funerals over the next ten or twenty years.

You will see that in 1960s there were just over 5000 interments at Nudgee Cemetery, with just under 4000 for the 1970s. The major reason for this was the opening of Pinnaroo Lawn Cemetery at Albany Creek. Another contributing factor is that in 1963 Pope Paul IV lifted a ban of Catholics being cremated, a ban that was in response to promotion of the practice by anti-clerical movements that denied the resurrection of the body. The lifting of the ban meant that Catholics could now choose cremation as a mode of disposal of their body. (I have read that, before the ban was lifted, in some circumstances where cremation was the only option and provided it was not for non-Christian reasons, a Catholic could be cremated)

History in the funeral industry shows that it takes about a generation or two for new ideas to be accepted. To illustrate this, the first crematorium in Brisbane, Mt Thompson, opened in 1935. This one crematorium serviced Brisbane until a second one opened in 1964 at Albany Creek.

Today in Brisbane, about 70% of all funerals are cremations. (Although accurate figures for the Catholic Community are not available, it is believed that around 50% of Catholics are now cremated.) In Toowoomba, where their crematorium opened in 1969, about 30% of all funerals in the late 1990s were cremations.

Nudgee Cemetery is very different today from its beginnings. In the early days the community would prepare the grave with no real management or plan to work from as seen from the following drawing that shows that the graves were dug in a general area.





A more recent drawing, circ 1945, looks like this.

PORTION A2				PORTION B1				PORTION A				PORTION Y							
35	1	35	1	35	1	35	1	1	1	9	1	9	1	1	9	1	9	1	9
36	2	36	2	36	2	36	2	2	2	10	2	10	2	2	10	2	10	2	10
37	3	37	3	37	3	37	3	3	3	11	3	11	3	3	11	3	11	3	11
38	4	38	4	38	4	38	4	4	4	12	4	12	4	4	12	4	12	4	12
39	5	39	5	39	5	39	5	5	5	13	5	13	5	5	13	5	13	5	13
40	6	40	6	40	6	40	6	6	6	14	6	14	6	6	14	6	14	6	14
41	7	41	7	41	7	41	7	7	7	15	7	15	7	7	15	7	15	7	15
42	8	42	8	42	8	42	8	8	8	16	8	16	8	8	16	8	16	8	16
43	9	43	9	43	9	43	9	9	9	17	9	17	9	9	17	9	17	9	17
44	10	44	10	44	10	44	10	10	10	18	10	18	10	10	18	10	18	10	18
45	11	45	11	45	11	45	11	11	11	19	11	19	11	11	19	11	19	11	19
46	12	46	12	46	12	46	12	12	12	20	12	20	12	12	20	12	20	12	20
47	13	47	13	47	13	47	13	13	13	21	13	21	13	13	21	13	21	13	21
48	14	48	14	48	14	48	14	14	14	22	14	22	14	14	22	14	22	14	22
49	15	49	15	49	15	49	15	15	15	23	15	23	15	15	23	15	23	15	23
50	16	50	16	50	16	50	16	16	16	24	16	24	16	16	24	16	24	16	24
51	17	51	17	51	17	51	17	17	17	25	17	25	17	17	25	17	25	17	25
52	18	52	18	52	18	52	18	18	18	26	18	26	18	18	26	18	26	18	26
53	19	53	19	53	19	53	19	19	19	27	19	27	19	19	27	19	27	19	27
54	20	54	20	54	20	54	20	20	20	28	20	28	20	20	28	20	28	20	28
55	21	55	21	55	21	55	21	21	21	29	21	29	21	21	29	21	29	21	29
56	22	56	22	56	22	56	22	22	22	30	22	30	22	22	30	22	30	22	30
57	23	57	23	57	23	57	23	23	23	31	23	31	23	23	31	23	31	23	31
58	24	58	24	58	24	58	24	24	24	32	24	32	24	24	32	24	32	24	32
59	25	59	25	59	25	59	25	25	25	33	25	33	25	25	33	25	33	25	33
60	26	60	26	60	26	60	26	26	26	34	26	34	26	26	34	26	34	26	34
61	27	61	27	61	27	61	27	27	27	35	27	35	27	27	35	27	35	27	35
62	28	62	28	62	28	62	28	28	28	36	28	36	28	28	36	28	36	28	36
63	29	63	29	63	29	63	29	29	29	37	29	37	29	29	37	29	37	29	37
64	30	64	30	64	30	64	30	30	30	38	30	38	30	30	38	30	38	30	38
65	31	65	31	65	31	65	31	31	31	39	31	39	31	31	39	31	39	31	39
66	32	66	32	66	32	66	32	32	32	40	32	40	32	32	40	32	40	32	40
67	33	67	33	67	33	67	33	33	33	41	33	41	33	33	41	33	41	33	41
68	34	68	34	68	34	68	34	34	34	42	34	42	34	34	42	34	42	34	42
PORTION A2				PORTION B2				PORTION M				PORTION O							
35	1	35	1	35	1	35	1	1	1	19	1	19	1	19	1	19	1	19	1
36	2	36	2	36	2	36	2	2	2	20	2	20	2	20	2	20	2	20	2
37	3	37	3	37	3	37	3	3	3	21	3	21	3	21	3	21	3	21	3
38	4	38	4	38	4	38	4	4	4	22	4	22	4	22	4	22	4	22	4
39	5	39	5	39	5	39	5	5	5	23	5	23	5	23	5	23	5	23	5
40	6	40	6	40	6	40	6	6	6	24	6	24	6	24	6	24	6	24	6
41	7	41	7	41	7	41	7	7	7	25	7	25	7	25	7	25	7	25	7
42	8	42	8	42	8	42	8	8	8	26	8	26	8	26	8	26	8	26	8
43	9	43	9	43	9	43	9	9	9	27	9	27	9	27	9	27	9	27	9
44	10	44	10	44	10	44	10	10	10	28	10	28	10	28	10	28	10	28	10
45	11	45	11	45	11	45	11	11	11	29	11	29	11	29	11	29	11	29	11
46	12	46	12	46	12	46	12	12	12	30	12	30	12	30	12	30	12	30	12
47	13	47	13	47	13	47	13	13	13	31	13	31	13	31	13	31	13	31	13
48	14	48	14	48	14	48	14	14	14	32	14	32	14	32	14	32	14	32	14
49	15	49	15	49	15	49	15	15	15	33	15	33	15	33	15	33	15	33	15
50	16	50	16	50	16	50	16	16	16	34	16	34	16	34	16	34	16	34	16
51	17	51	17	51	17	51	17	17	17	35	17	35	17	35	17	35	17	35	17
52	18	52	18	52	18	52	18	18	18	36	18	36	18	36	18	36	18	36	18
53	19	53	19	53	19	53	19	19	19	37	19	37	19	37	19	37	19	37	19
54	20	54	20	54	20	54	20	20	20	38	20	38	20	38	20	38	20	38	20
55	21	55	21	55	21	55	21	21	21	39	21	39	21	39	21	39	21	39	21
56	22	56	22	56	22	56	22	22	22	40	22	40	22	40	22	40	22	40	22
57	23	57	23	57	23	57	23	23	23	41	23	41	23	41	23	41	23	41	23
58	24	58	24	58	24	58	24	24	24	42	24	42	24	42	24	42	24	42	24
59	25	59	25	59	25	59	25	25	25	43	25	43	25	43	25	43	25	43	25
60	26	60	26	60	26	60	26	26	26	44	26	44	26	44	26	44	26	44	26
61	27	61	27	61	27	61	27	27	27	45	27	45	27	45	27	45	27	45	27
62	28	62	28	62	28	62	28	28	28	46	28	46	28	46	28	46	28	46	28
63	29	63	29	63	29	63	29	29	29	47	29	47	29	47	29	47	29	47	29
64	30	64	30	64	30	64	30	30	30	48	30	48	30	48	30	48	30	48	30
65	31	65	31	65	31	65	31	31	31	49	31	49	31	49	31	49	31	49	31
66	32	66	32	66	32	66	32	32	32	50	32	50	32	50	32	50	32	50	32
67	33	67	33	67	33	67	33	33	33	51	33	51	33	51	33	51	33	51	33
68	34	68	34	68	34	68	34	34	34	52	34	52	34	52	34	52	34	52	34

Nudgee Cemetery requires an ongoing maintenance program. During the 1980s this was somewhat lacking and it became overgrown with grass. I have some photos available showing the state of the cemetery during this period.

The types of burial facilities have also changed with the community. In the early days large monuments indicated a person's status or importance to the community. The bigger the memorial the better. It wasn't too long before people understood that those who could not afford lavish monuments may have loved their family member just as much as those who erected the larger monuments. Family graves could be as large as 18-20 plots. These larger graves have the larger memorials which as time goes on can become unstable.

In the late 1960s a burial in a lawn section was made available. The lawn sections at Nudgee have a standard granite gravestone where the memorial says nothing about a person's status, as we are all the same in the eyes of God.

Types of Burial Facility available at Nudgee:

- Monumental
- Lawn
- In ground vault
- Above ground vault
- Chapels
- Memorial Gardens

**Monumental Graves** are the original style of grave. The person is buried in the ground and a monument is erected over the entire site. This monument is constructed of either concrete or stone material. Monumental graves usually accommodate two burials although in some circumstances three, provided that this is indicated at the time of the first burial. Three burials usually means an infant and two adults and the maintenance of these monuments is the responsibility of the family.

**Lawn Graves** are a more recent design. As mentioned, from the late 1960s a lawn section was introduced at Nudgee Cemetery. A standard granite gravestone is included in the burial fee and the inscription is generally the deceased's name, date of birth and date of death. Another option is one with a base with or without two vases. Lawn graves were originally prepared for two burials unless otherwise requested. In 1993 the Cemetery began preparing all lawn graves for three interments. There must be a twelve month time lapse between each burial. Should 12 months not have lapsed after the first burial, a second burial is possible however this would then limit the grave to two burials.

**In-Ground Vaults, Above-Ground Vaults and Chapels** are burial facilities constructed of concrete. These facilities are usually requested by the European community (Italian mainly). A choice of a family chapel or community chapel bed is available. The family chapels accommodate either 8 or 10 family members. The Community Chapel beds accommodate 16 people with most purchases being 2 beds. The first family chapels were built in the early 1960s, with the first community chapel constructed mid to late 1970s.

**A Memorial Garden** is an area where people can have the ashes of their family members interred.

Cemeteries in general can be like a history book. By walking up and down the pathways in a cemetery you can identify many different things about a community. If a section has several young people in one area it is possible that a disease was present in that community at that time and so on

One thing that does not show up on the gravestone is what this person did during their life. The gravestone indicates the Date of Birth - Date of Death. Nudgee Cemetery is offering to families the option of a page in the Australian Book of Memories. The family can protect the eulogy, add photos and other information about the person who has died. The page is included in the National Book kept in the National Library in Canberra, the Queensland edition kept at the State Library, on the Australian Book of Memories Website and, for those who are buried at Nudgee, a local edition that will be kept at the Cemetery Office. (The local Book requires 200 pages before it is available at the Cemetery). The idea is that when future generations visit the Cemetery they will get more information than just two dates.

During this presentation you would have heard me referring to gravestones. Most people use the term headstone. While in some cemeteries this may be correct, most cemeteries have around half of the grave markers at the foot end of the grave.

When Christians are buried in the grave their feet should be toward the east. This custom we find alluded to by Bishop Hildebert at the beginning of the twelfth century (P.L, CLXXI, 896), and its symbolism is discussed by Durandas.

‘A man ought to be buried’, he says, ‘that while his head lies to the West his feet are turned to the East, for thus he prays as it were by his very position and suggests that he is ready to hasten from the West to the East

Most cemeteries, including Nudgee, have gravestones back to back. This means that half of all gravestones are at the foot-end of the grave.

Nudgee has had 140 years of operation since its first burial. In 2007 we hope to have our website operational and this will include a map of the entire cemetery. The public will be able to search the records for family members, identify the site and click on a button that will bring up a photograph of the grave - essentially visitation online. This will allow those who are some distance away from Brisbane, the opportunity from wherever they are, to visit, reflect, and pray for their family member.

*David Molloy is the manager of Nudgee Catholic Cemetery in Brisbane and has been involved in the funeral industry for 20 years.*

*His experience confirms how important it is to arrange funerals to meet the individual needs and expectations of families.*

*This he believes is the key to help them start their grieving process. The main focus of his role at the cemetery is to provide a tranquil place for people to remember and pray for their deceased family members.*