AN HISTORICAL SURVEY:

Undertakers and Cemeteries in the Carlton area.

September 1967.
Memorial to
JOHN ALEXANDER BURNETT
The first burial in the
Cemetery, 28th May,
1852

[On the Right]

Memorial to
ROBERT HODDLE
First Surveyor General of
Victoria

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BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES
Acknowledgements:
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is often difficult to express gratitude without appearing trite; but of those who helped in the research of this thesis, the author should like particularly to thank:

Mrs. Sebire, of the Melbourne General Cemetery
Mr. M. Mulqueen, Mulqueen and Sons, Funeral Directors
Mr. George Daws, Monumental Mason, Rathdowne Street, Carlton
Mr. Bill McKenzie, Joseph Allison, Funeral Directors
Mr. Fred Hawkins, Tobacconist, Elgin Street, Carlton
Mr. A. T. Latham, Royal Historical Society
Messrs. Graham and Arthur Holdsworth

and especially

Mr. John Allison of John (Roy V.) Allison, 94 Victoria Street, Richmond, for his patience and invaluable help.

Funeral Directors contacted (with varied results) were:
The above mentioned
Sleight’s, St. Kilda
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS (Cont'd).

Jewish Burial Society, Carlton
W. G. Apps and Son, St. Kilda
Herbert King, Richmond
E. Mathews, South Yarra
Alfred Allison, Clifton Hill
J. D. Lewis, Brunswick
W. G. Raven, North Melbourne
and others.

[Signature]

Richard L. Thorp
SYNOPSIS:

Research for this thesis was made particularly difficult by the almost complete lack of authenticated information. Early Melbourne directories, themselves either incomplete or challengeable did give some indication to the names and number of early funeral directors - or undertakers, as they were known then.

Facts, or statements as close to fact as possible, have had to be cross-referenced through a series of tape-recorded interviews.

To add to research difficulty, a surprisingly large number of Funeral Directors refused to speak in any way, either historically or specifically, about their trade.

Even those Directors who would speak freely admitted that all old records have been destroyed; particularly Sleight's and J. D. Lewis, two of the oldest establishments close to Carlton.

It has been found that few Undertakers had their headquarters (only branches) in Carlton, and in an attempt to gain their history in depth, Undertakers in the suburbs approximate to Carlton have been studied.
SYNOPSIS (Cont'd)

Due to the lack of precise information regarding the history of particular firms, and that all Carlton Undertaker's branches have been studied from an architectural (or building) aspect, this thesis attempts to portray the undertaker as an individual, provide anecdotes to develop them as personalities and to suggest their place in the society of the time.

This thesis covers a time from foundation to about 1950 - in some respects loosely - but its aim is a clear personal and social picture of the Undertaking trade. Cemeteries are briefly studied because of their obvious relationship to the trade. Practices like embalming are also broadly mentioned, for this practice in particular illustrates the changing attitudes of and towards Funeral Directors over the years.

Among all the books on Colonial Melbourne, only two were found with worthwhile sections on undertakers. It is for these reasons that the tape recorder became the chief instrument in the research for this thesis.
SYNOPSIS (Cont'd)

People from grave diggers to long-established tobacconists were approached in the hope of gleaning more information.

Naturally, in an inquiry of this type suspicion was an important factor. There is no doubt that the reticence occurring at the sight of the tape recorder caused the loss of some information. The most obvious deficiencies in this thesis are:

(a) lack of definite dates
(b) lack of family information
(c) lack of address movements

However, the attempt to present a description of the undertaker has been highly colored by the many surprising clear memories which form the basis of this book.
CHAPTER ONE:

Early Burial Grounds.
CHAPTER 1
EARLY BURIAL GROUNDS

The first burial ground in Melbourne was a small hill to the North-West of the town. Named "Burial Hill" (1), a flagstaff was later erected for signalling to ships in the Bay (2).

The cemetery was closed in 1838 as being unsuitable for the purpose and became a recreation area for the inhabitants. Only six people were buried here -

"Here upon the grass hillside was inhumed the first, white corpse - the remains of Willie, the child of James Goodman, who was buried on 13 May, 1836 - the first of the new colonists who found an early and final resting place in a Melbourne Cemetery."

The second funeral in Burial Hill was that of Mr. Charles Franks and his shepherd. They had been murdered by some Goulburn aboriginals on Franks' station near the Werribee River. The bodies were brought to Melbourne by horse and dray and were "accorded a species of public funeral".
CHAPTER 1 - Early Burial Grounds (Cont'd)

The next "occupant" was a seaman from the Revenue Cutter "Rattlesnake" which cruised between Sydney and Melbourne. Landing firearms at Williamstown, the man accidentally shot himself.

The fourth was of the wife of John Ross, "who, in a fit of delerium tremens, committed suicide by shooting herself with a pistol."

The last interment was a small child of a Mr. Wells (3).

In 1836 there were three deaths recorded in Port Phillip, one in 1837, but rose to twenty in 1838.

"Burial Hill" had become insufficient to cater for the deaths among the larger population. Although the hill had been closed for funerals the buried six were eventually exhumed and moved to Fawkner cemetary.

The re-burial area was railed off and a small monument erected.

ERECTED

to the

MEMORY OF

SOME OF THE EARLIEST OF

THE PIONEERS OF THIS COLONY
TYPICAL FUNERAL CORTEGE  C. 1895

Note: Glass hearse and plumed horses.
CHAPTER 1 - Early Burial Grounds (Cont'd)

In 1839, unoccupied land was plentiful around the town, and eight acres adjacent to Flagstaff Hall was set aside as a burial ground. "Garryowan" does not state exactly where this was situated.

Known as the "Old Cemetery", it appears that it was formally opened on June 1, 1843, and now where Victoria market is situated. Though the Government freely granted the land no funds were set aside for fencing, and for a while the cemetery was open common. The first male buried there was John Smith, a shepherd speared by blacks near Geelong.

The first female was Miss Hannah Mayne. As the deaths recorded in 1839 rose to 67 and as John Batman's funeral took place on 8 May, 1839, his was about the thirtieth interment in the Old Cemetery. No records of any kind were kept.

The cemetery was closed by Proclamation on June 1, 1854 (4), after the Melbourne General Cemetery open on June 1, 1853. Some families still held rights to bury relative's in the Old Cemetery but after 1854, few funerals took place.
CHAPTER 1 - Early Burial Grounds (Cont'd)

There were only 217 between 1866 to 1881. Many were exhumed later and moved to the "New Cemetery" (as the General Cemetery was known for many years).

"Previous to the year 1843, pieces of the ground forming the Old Melbourne Cemetery seem to have been set apart and used by different religious denominations for the burial of the dead. On 30th January 1843, a Crown Grant was issued to George Lilly, William Wilton, J. Jones Peers, Thomas Jennings and William Willoughby, in trust for the interment of the dead according to the use of Wesleyan Methodists.

On the 13th May, 1843, a Crown Grant was issued to the Right Rev. William Grant Broughton, D.D., in trust for the interment of the dead, according to the use of the United Church of England and Ireland.

On 19th October, 1843, a Crown Grant was issued to William Ryrie, James Oliphant Denny and J. Hunter Patterson, in trust for the interment of the dead, according to the use of the Church of Scotland.
CHAPTER 1 - Early Burial Grounds (Cont'd)

On the 18th December, 1844, a Crown Grant was issued to Michael Cashmore, Solomon Benjamin and Ashur Hymen Hart, in trust for the interment of the dead, according to the custom of the Jews.

On 30th November, 1847, a Crown Grant was issued to Robert Dunsford, Godfrey Howitt, Edward Sayoe and John Bakewell, in trust for the interment of the dead, according to the use of the Society of Friends.

And on the same date as above, a Crown Grant was issued to the Rev. Alexander Morison, Thomas Fulton and Edwin Lawney Sayers, upon trust, for the interment of the dead, according to the use of the Independents.

The pieces of land comprised in these grants do not include the whole pieces of land known as the "Old Melbourne Cemetery", but there is a portion which was used by the Roman Catholics, and another portion which was set apart for the burial of Aboriginals, which appear to be still vested in Her Majesty Victoria; no grants appearing on record.

By Act 14, Victoria No. 19 Section 18, the Officer Administering the Government of Port Phillip was empowered by Proclamation to close the Cemetery, except vaults and enclosed portions of (and that were private property). The Melbourne General Cemetery was opened in 1853.
CHAPTER 1 - Early Burial Grounds (Cont'd)

By Proclamation of June 1st, 1854, John V. Foster, the Officer Administering the Government, closed the cemetery in accordance with the act. After this Proclamation, the Old Cemetery seems to have slept for 10 years, and all about the previous titles, too, seems to have been forgotten. (5).

By an order in council (18th April, 1864) six new Trustees were invested - ignoring the previous Trustees altogether, it seems, and under the assumption that the provisions of the Cemeteries Statue 1864 were applicable.

A schedule of Diocesan Fees published by the Church of England is partly set out below:

Burial in a grave:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2.0 shillings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clergyman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish Clerk</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexton</td>
<td>3.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>6.6d.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Burial in a vault:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>£1.1.00</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clergyman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish Clerk</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexton</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>21.16.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1 – Early Burial Grounds (Cont'd)

The Melbourne Cemetery occupies an area of approximately 106 acres.

At the beginning of this century the rapidly expanding population of Melbourne made a larger cemetery necessary, and the Melbourne General Cemetery was closed to enable the Fawkner and Springvale Cemeteries to be established. After 25 years, the Cemetery was re-opened, and the deterioration which occurred during closure was rectified. The Revenue of the Cemetery is derived from four principal sources.

(a) Sales of burial rights
(b) Burial fees
(c) Fees for maintenance of graves
(d) Interest on invested funds

The Cemetery has 4½ miles of roads, 42 miles of paths – and 100,000 graves, in which 277,074 persons are buried (1952) (6)
PLAN OF MELBOURNE GENERAL CEMETERY

Opened June 1st, 1853.
MELBOURNE GENERAL CEMETARY - ENTRANCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDINGS

"When in 1933 an extension of the burial area was granted by a special Act of Parliament, a new entrance was made on the frontage to College Crescent by the removal and re-erection of the magnificent iron gates which have been a notable ornament to the Cemetery for over a hundred years. The buildings which had served as offices and gatekeeper's lodge were also removed and the material used for the erection of an administrative block on the new site" ...... from the "Columbarium and Garden Remembrance" booklet published by the Cemetery Trustees in 1963.
FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER ONE:

1. P694 - "Chronicles"
2. The Age 4/2/1933
3. P694 - "Chronicles"
4. ibid
5. The Age ibid
6. Booklet - "Melbourne General Cemetery".
CHAPTER TWO:

The First Undertakers.
CHAPTER 2

The First Undertakers

In the early days of the Colony, Death was a fact and a possibility close to everyone. Funerals were conducted in the most casual, unsentimental manner by the first undertakers. Coffins were generally crudely made - usually little more than small powder cases - and bodies were unceremoniously packed into them. In late 1838 (1) the body of a recently dead man was found in a hut a short distance from the intersection of Collins and Queen Streets. No one could identify him, and there was no one who was obliged to arrange his burial. Eventually, three or four citizens wrapped the body in some old baggage, placed it on a chair, and chaired it to the cemetery. The thought of leaving the body in the hot summer winds was out of the question. However, their good citizenship had unfortunate results. There was no official at the Cemetery to help them - and they had to dig the grave themselves. For some years, coffins had to be carried to the Cemetery on men's shoulders, because there was no other means of conveyance.
CHAPTER 2 - The First Undertakers (Cont'd)

Melbourne's first undertaker cannot be definitely established - but it is likely he was either a blacksmith (2) or a carpenter and joiner. "There has been a controversy more than once raised as to the identity of the first person obliging enough to undertake professionally for the becoming disposal of the dead, and more than one claim has been advanced. The following advertisement of 10th January, 1839, seems to answer the question:

CARPENTER, JOINER AND UNDERTAKER

Robert Frost begs to inform the inhabitants of Port Phillip generally, that he has commenced business in Collins Street, Melbourne, and assures those people who may honour him with their patronage, that all orders entrusted to his care will be promptly executed at moderate terms.

FUNEALS ATTENDED ON THE SHORTEST NOTICE (3)

Noting the previously stated figures of deaths in the Colony, undertaking would not have been particularly profitable - although deaths did rise to 193 in 1840.
CHAPTER 2 - The First Undertakers (Cont’d)

The era of solemn faced undertakers, elaborate glass hearsees, and nodding black plumes was soon to begin. A "Cabinet and Upholstery Warehouse" was opened by Mr. Samuel Crook in William Street, and in January 1840 he announced that "a hearse is in the course of building and will be let out on hire" (4). A year after, Mr. Thomas Croft endeavoured to improve on Crook's announcement for he "combined the office of sexton and undertaker, and performs funerals on the shortest notice, and at the most reasonable terms. A mourning hearse if required (5). There was also a well-known undertaker for a long time recognised as a Melbourne identity: "Mr. Thomas Jennings, who, in his day, saw many of the residents of the Melbourne cemeteries quietly disposed of, and it was not until 1834 that he followed them" (6). The blacksmith/undertaker still existed, usually keeping a crude hearse parked in the storeyard, while not in use, the chickens would roost in it - the blacksmith had no other amenities of any kind. (7).

Henry J. R. Lewis; Furnishing Undertaker, was established on the corner of Johnson and Hertford Street, Fitzroy in 1843. At this time aboriginals still held corroborees in Johnson Street, (9) and Elgin
FEDERAL LEAVING THE CENTRAL MISSION CHURCH, NORTH MELBOURNE. 1910

Note: Robbed black cloak over horse.
CHAPTER 2 - The First Undertakers (Cont'd)

Street, Carlton, had a creek running down its centre, and a small dam on the corner of Lygon Street where small children swam. John Batman was buried on May 7, 1839 by "A. Bailey, Undertaker", of whom no trace remains. His name does not appear in any subsequent directories. W. C. Raven, undertakers, was established in North Melbourne in about 1853. The same firm functions today. Mr. Raven arrived in Melbourne in 1841 from Hampton, England, in the ship "Frank Field".

Early undertakers imported virtually all their equipment from England and Europe: plumes for horses, hearse etc. The hearse drivers wore frock coats and top hats, and exuded an atmosphere of doom. Most of these customs have now died out, and black suits are rarely seen now, and hearse are painted light grey to white. Funeral parlor waiting rooms had many pictures on the walls of the famous people who had been buried by the particular undertaker. Mr. Lulqueen remembers a hotel which displayed a large photograph of Les Darcy, the boxer, in its bar - and shoe him lying in his coffin.

The characters that developed among early undertakers have disappeared - and although death has always been treated seriously, there is now an abruptness, a lack of "send-off", which enhanced the earlier funeral.
FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER TWO

1. P698 "Chronicles"
2. Mr. Mulqueen
3. Chronicles ibid
4. ibid
5. ibid
6. ibid p. 699
7. Mr. Mulqueen
8. Mr. A. Holdsworth
CHAPTER THREE:

The Trade.
CHAPTER 3

THE TRADE

Up to the 1920's, all funeral cortages left the homes of the deceased. A minister would give a short service in the home before the casket left for the Cemetery. There still is a Roman Catholic Chapel at the Melbourne General Cemetery (which is now unused).

There was no time that saw any sudden rise in the number of undertakers. Even in Carlton, there were never more than five undertakers who had their head offices there, although some branch offices were established.

There has been great financial inter-action between various firms, and it has been true that most new undertakers have been absorbed by the larger businesses.

In the 1851 directory, it can be seen that the early undertaker had to rely on several trades:

BENJAMIN WILLIS, 80 COLLINS STREET

Cabinet maker, carpenter and undertaker (1)

Now only four Funeral Directors (as undertakers are known today) do their own coffin making.
A GRAVE ALLOCATION CERTIFICATE DATED 1958
MELBOURNE GENERAL CEMETERY

No. 195
Compartment B
Division No. 1276

9th April 1853
CHAPTER 3 - The Trade (Cont'd)

Rintoul and Hopkins, of Smith Street, Fitzroy built hearses to order. Most funeral cars had plate glass sides and at each end there were plate glass doors all surrounded by a deep moulding. The glass was embossed in complex patterns - the side panels with wreaths of passion, flowers and convolvulus, with a winged cherub in the centre; the front doors with the snake and inverted torch (the symbol of death), and the door at the rear with suspended lamps burning incense. The interior of the car was elaborately fitted, either side of a slightly raised platform being composed of holly and cedar, which was displayed through the glass. The side rails were of painted silver and the platform itself was of polished wood. There were ornamental carved shutters for the side and back windows, and a substantial overhanging roof was either ornamented with ostrich plumes or large decorated urns (2).

Burial procedure varied according to denomination - and indeed, cemeteries were sectioned into areas for the different religious faiths. The most unusual practice was that of the Chinese, who
A BUTCH D.4. TRUCK FITTED OUT AS A GLASS HEARSE. C. 1924

Note: Removable panels fitted over glass sides. This hearse was capable of holding four coffins.
CHAPTER 3 - The Trade (Cont'd)

cooked food (often whole pigs) in ovens specially built by them in
the Melbourne General Cemetery. The food would be placed on the grave
to placate and satisfy the spirits. Local Carlton children enjoyed
this rite, especially when the Chinese left the Cemetery late in the
afternoon. Few Chinese graves remain, for most bodies have been
exhumed and transported back to China.

The remains would be sent to the Chang Sha hospital near Hong Kong, and
remained there until the head of the deceased's Tong gave permission
to bury them in the area where the deceased was born.

Undertakers' branches in Carlton generally consisted of a front office
and possibly a stable and garage for the hearse and carriages. Prices
for funerals ranged from 7/6d. for a paupers funeral, to £30 for the
most extravagant ceremonies. General prices were about 7/10.0 inclusive
for a hearse and two horses of the same colour. If, however a black
and a white horse was requested, the price rose by one pound. Grave
plots ranged from 10/- to £2 - they may cost up to £1000 today (3).

The first funeral on record conducted by Josiah Holdsworth, in 1832,
quotes these figures:

Hearse and one horse: (baby's funeral) £4.10.0
" " two " (adult funeral) £3.0.0
CHAPTER 3 - The Trade (Cont'd)

Undertakers' business rose and fell (when they were not taken over or financially untenable) due to population movement. Some areas changed character, and population density also changed. This is true of Carlton, which in early times was a high-class residential area for merchants, and could support three or four undertakers or branches. As Melbourne's suburban area began to spread, inner-suburban undertakers began to feel the easing in frequency of business. In Carlton today, where the population is largely sedentary or very young, J. Holdsworth's only carry out about 200 funerals per year, and derive their main source of income from hiring their vehicles to outer suburban Funeral Directors. A noticeable increase in Director's branches can be seen as the population increased during the Gold Rush in the 1850's.

Pre-burial care of bodies was a very primitive matter. There was no refrigeration or air conditioning to prevent deterioration and embalming was virtually unknown until T. H. Allison, of 131 Elgin Street, Carlton announced his capabilities. Due to the lack of speed of communication around Melbourne, bodies could not be buried for up to five days so all relatives of the deceased could be notified. This frequently led to
CHAPTER 3 - The Trade (Cont'd)

unpleasantness - although little could be done about it. This practice was inherited from England, where there was little problem in the colder climate. Although, this may infer a certain lack of care (or respect) for the dead, it seems that there has always been reverence in the "approach to death". (4). Attitudes today are the same if not more pronounced, as they have always been.

There were few unusual tombstone epitaphs seen in Melbourne - but possibly the one which caused the greatest public outcry was this:

Erected in grateful remembrance of my faithful dog Fido, who died on March 20th, 1900. A patient partner during 10 years of life's journey, who had eaten the same bread with me and was to me a friend. The more I know of men the more I admire dogs.

W. Webb (5)

After 1886, only fifteen buildings were erected in Carlton (6). At no time was any building specially constructed for an undertaker. Ten of these buildings were built on land owned by A. A. Sleight, and Co,
CHAPTER 3 - The Trade (Cont'd)

which was formed in 1839 - but Sleight's never established a branch
of their business in Carlton (except for a very short time, and even
then not under their name. See Allison's).

There are undertakers whose names can be found in directories and old
newspapers, but no information about them from libraries or people's
memories can be found. Two in particular are Croft and Murray, 32
Madeline Street, North Melbourne (7).

Madeline Street was renamed Swanston Street soon after 1900. This
address in the directory of 1862 was changed to read "Carlton", but no
further information could be found. The numbering system of Carlton
streets was quite erratic until after 1900, when all buildings were
re-numbered. Jas. Ingram; corner Rathdowne Street and Barkly Street,
Carlton - no further information.

Architecturally, undertakers' establishments are of no particular
interest. As has been stated, not one in Carlton was built purely for
the purpose. They are generally converted shops, as seen in the
photograph included in this book. No extensive alterations to
existing buildings taken over by undertakers were necessary, and it is
possible only in interior decoration that they are of note.
CHAPTER 3 - The Trade (Cont'd)

The funeral parlor was usually painted cream throughout, with timber stained very dark. Picture rails were heavy and ornate, and furniture was sombre and deeply carved (\(^\text{1}^\)).

Windows had small stained-glass insets of urns and flowing patterns.

An example of these can be seen in the highlight windows or the front of Holdsworth's in Lygon Street. Names and services were generally written in gold on the windows - see early photographs.

Undertakers' practices in greater detail shall be given in subsequent chapters.
FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER THREE

1. Melbourne Directory 1851
2. The Australasian, 6/9/1894
3. Mr. Bulqueen
4. ibid
5. The Argus, 12/2/1949
7. Melbourne Directory 1860
8. Mr. John Allison
CHAPTER FOUR:

Embalming.
CHAPTER 4

EMBALMING

In the early days of the colony, preservation of bodies was unknown. The value of embalming was really first recognised during and after the American Civil War. Despite adverse publicity (e.g. "The American Way of Death, by Jessica Mitford) embalming is strictly a sanitary process. As has been medically proven disease does not stop after death, and embalming stops the danger of infection prior to burial; this factor is most important because the majority of mourners wish to view the body – Europeans without exception, and the majority of Australians (1).

The first embalmers in Melbourne were not trained. Their knowledge came from any books they could find on the subject, but mainly from experimenting. However, it was not long before the need for sterilisation and the retardation of bacteria was recognised.

"We would call the special attention of our readers to the advertisement of Mr. T. H. Allison, of Elgin Street, Carlton, Undertaker. It appears that he has studied and learnt the embalming so urgently required in this colony ......." (2).
CHAPTER 4 - Embalming (Cont'd)

When embalming began in the Colony, many undertakers carried out and only charged for materials. It was especially necessary if a body had to be transported some distance.

John (Roy V.) Allison's have been embalming since 1920 - but some undertakers, like Holdsworth's in Lygon Street, Carlton, rely on air conditioning and refrigeration. A temperature in the low 40's F. is necessary. However, if a body is to be transported overseas, as happens often with Greek and Italian immigrants, it must be embalmed.

Embalming, is at simplest, the replacement of blood with preservative spirit. Allison's had the first fully equipped mortuary in Melbourne able to do any kind of embalming. Because people wish to see the body before burial, embalming is a worthwhile practice even apart from health reasons. The case may have died in hospital from a disease, and after embalming may look better than when in hospital. Accident victims are particularly necessitators of embalming.

Exhumation is reasonably common today, as it was in the early days of the Colony. It often occurs that a man who moves from one city to another applies to have the remains of his wife buried in a cemetery nearby, and many immigrants request that the body be returned to their
CHAPTER 4 - Embalming (Cont'd)

native land.

When Allison's branch 94 Victoria Street, Richmond, was built about 1923, it contained the first on-premises mortuary chapel in Melbourne. This building started the trend which led to all funerals leaving the Funeral Directors' rather than the house.

Today Allison's employ five full-time embalmers. Undertakers are sometimes called upon to execute difficult tasks. Mr. John Allison remembers the death of a young migrant girl in Melbourne whose parents requested that her body be flown back to her native soil: a small island in the Outer Hebrides. A flight to London was arranged, then to Glasgow. A charter plane flew then to a rough airstrip on an adjacent airline. A fishing boat arranged by a local priest took the body to the home island. "People expect service .......".

Embalming, regarded by most either as suspicious or a joke, bought about this article in 1941:

"EMBALMING FLUID WOULD KILL CAR ENGINE, EXPERTS SAY ...

SYDNEY: Embalming fluid, reported to have been used by some taxi drivers as a substitute for petrol will not embalm the engine's, but will corrode them.
CHAPTER 4 - Embalming (Cont'd)

Undertakers said today that embalming spirit was so corrosive that it ate through metal . . . .

The President of the Australian Funeral Directors Association (Mr. T. J. Andrews) took another angle: "I am amazed," he said, "at the callousness of people who would use a material so urgently needed by Funeral Directors for the mere purpose of increasing their mileage . . . ."

Most undertakers will not talk about embalming in detail. They feel it is "not for general publication." Thus the public ignorance of the Funeral Directors trade continues, and society tends to look on the Director as a mystical, high-priced necessity.
THE CEMETARY PLATFORM OF PRINCES BRIDGE - C. 1911
SPRINGVALE (INTRODUCED IN USE IN 1911)

transport of coffins from the Railway morgue
NOTES

FOUR

John Allison

Australasian ibid Chapter Three
CHAPTER FIVE:

The Funeral Directors.
T E R 5

R A L    D I R E C T O R S

L E S T. J O N E S

Information in depth concerning the "Reverend" Charles T.
was available. At one time he had a branch office at 149 Elgin
Carlton, opposite the Post Office. The office was a
small shop (See photograph).

Articles appear regularly in the 1899 & 1900 editions of the
Advertiser, first appearing on August 26, 1899. He was
worship with his brother Thomas. Those interviewed could
believe that Jones was unusual in the following respect:
rend Charles has brought about the very latest thing in
conomy. He has discovered the means of tucking poor humanity
in and "at prices which defy competition". A month ago,
Jones was an undertaker only, one who contracted with an out-of-
son to do the burial service at low rates. But these are times
itation, and the rates were not cheap enough; so the inventive
or was equal to the emergency. He discovered in the law a
n that any man is entitled to assume the title of priest or
if he can get only 40 householders to petition for his
5 - The Funeral Directors - Charles T. Jones (Cont'd)

went to the cure of souls. This he did, and blossomed as to a titled divine, with full corresponding powers. In this vociferous of undertaker and parson he was in a position to outdo in the trade. It was literally a stroke of genius. One and a man can encoffin his clients, hearse them and perform the service over them in all the odor of unchallenged sanctity. (1).

One good point about the service given by Mr. Jones - there collection, and the orthodox church coin which our "Herald" man nervously fingering for an hour and a quarter will now he devoted to some less holy object. (2).

"Charles Jones, undertaker and church reformer (The Reformed in England), has naturally come in for some condemnation, but was paid a tribute to his enterprise in setting up as a kind legal 'George and George', selling everything in the parson and a little more besides. Mr. Jones will marry you, christen you, make your coffin, pray for you, forgive all your sins, bably, too, procure you a divorce, all by reason of his one as a reformed parson. You belong to his church, just as, you belong to a circulating library, and he does the thing complete.
he gives indulgences away with a pound of tea, if you are
that way, or procures you a pair of boots and remission of all
is for, say, half a guinea. It is cheap, and tends to
vation of business. (3).

"Reverend" undertaker replied in writing, stating, that he
undertaking members in his 'congregation', and that the real
or the opposition to him was that "the firm of Jones and Sons,
belong, conduct funerals in best style for one half less
an any associated, undertaker, and that I read the burial
or any person who desires it without any charge at all". (4).
ght of public opinion was clearly against Charles Jones, who
to backpedal on his publicity.

editor:

am not so enamoured of my position as a registered clergyman as
e to retain it for one moment ...... (5) Charles T. Jones
rend Jones, though archbishop, rector, curate and general
of the "Reformed Church of England", is in reality far more
. As a clergyman he can marry you, as an asphalter, he can
a cycling track, and when you have broken your neck racing
5 - The Funeral Directors - Charles T. Jones (Cont'd)

glossy surface he can most expeditiously bury you as an
cor; and, as a clergyman once more, can read the service
for body. The Rev. Jones only needs to be registered as a
practitioner, a duly qualified poet and plumber, and the
fabric of domesticity would be within his comprehensive ken.
mission of Mr. Jones to the ranks of the clergy is "More work
Undertaker" with a vengeance.

as may be dismissed by repeating his motto:
live and be miserable when you can be buried by
Jones for £10?" (7)

public pressure, Jones' business continued for some years
the Carlton branch closed about 1902 through loss of
- and closed when he was bankrupted about 1920. (8)
[Handwritten text]

14th April 1832

[Postmark]

1d

[Stamp]

£ 5 10 0

1 8 0

£ 7 6 0

£ 1 8 0

£ 5 18 0

[Signature]

[Handwritten note]
5 - The Funeral Directors (Cont'd)

JISON'S

story of the Allison family is typical in that Funeral
ners from the earliest times handed their business from
to son. Mulqueen's, for instance can trace their history
for 100 years. This practice is widespread in the trade, and
or business in Australia has shown this trend. Although
Henry Allison was the only member of the family who practiced
on, the family history is of great interest.

't Allison undertaker was Thomas Allison, whose office was in
bury Road, London. He had worked as a handy man/servant in a
amily home for many years. His duties included making a
etc. if there was death in his employer's family. This
on was the way independent undertakers came into being (1).
Allison had five sons. One, Edward William Allison, came
alia in the early 1840's to gauge the undertaking "climate".
ht a number of passenger cabs, and as part of his service, he
contracted to carry coffins. Soon after he sent for his
others, Joseph, Henry, John and James. All became undertakers
5 - The Funeral Directors - The Allison's (Cont'd)

James, who was a builder of houses in Brunswick (2), son became Sir William J. Allison. Henry Allison also had service, and in 1854 was the first Allison to have a solely taking" business.

undertaking brothers were originally in the one establishment h Melbourne - but no partnership was in existence. Thomas in London was sending his sons supplies, equipment, and al support. However, one of the brother (name not offered) appropriating these funds, and this was discovered when John returned to London and found the discrepancies. He returned ralia in the ship "Sussex". The brothers broke up their e in the late '50's, and went independent ways.

e brothers broke up, Joseph started his business in Essendon, Syd ney Road, Brunswick. The brothers had had an unwritten nt that they would not open in opposition to one another. e h bought a property on the corner of Mitchell Street, ok. John Allison was most annoyed, and opened a branch in
VICE OF JOHN ALLISON - 94 VICTORIA STREET, RICHMOND. C. 1922

AND BUSINESS ENTRANCE)

Here was located the first Funeral Directors Chapel in Melbourne.
OF EMBALMING CHAMBER OF JOHN ALLISON, 94 VICTORIA STREET,

- C. 1924.

...ely the most fully equipped Private Mortuary in Australia.

Public Hospitals of the capital cities have anything to
t this room. Here are found all the most approved fluids,
atives etc., used in the modern sanitary treatment of the
1." ....... from J. Allison's 1924 brochure.
FUNERAL OF MR. JOHN ALLISON, MAY 1921.

: Motorised windowless hearse
on as possible. Thus began the rivalry that has
ill the present day — and even now there is no talk-
tion.
ent into partnership with undertaker named Little
Street, Richmond. There has been a Funeral Director
or about 130 years. Then "Allison and Little", the
the business was bought by John Allison, and the
became "John Allison, Undertaker".

JOHN ALLISON, UNDERTAKER
Inley Road, Brunswick - Victoria Street, Richmond
urses, Mourning Coaches and every requisite supplied
Town and Country.
ephone 1003

I three separate Allison Directors today. Joseph
final business has been handed down to today. Edward
't the business due to illness and lived in the country
. John (Roy V) Allison's (Roy is the youngest son of
is now a public company. Henry Allison's son Alfred
business to Alfred Dowling, his foreman.

WILLIAM ALLISON

rd William Allison returned to Melbourne from the country, 181 Elgin Street, Carlton, from T. H. Allison (another of his sons). However, when E. W. Allison died, Thomas evicted his tenants and began business himself.

T. H. ALLISON

UNDERTAKER AND EMBALMER

HEAD OFFICE: 181 ELGIN STREET, CARLTON

BRANCHES: Derby Street, Collingwood 307 Victoria Street, West Melbourne

"Funerals furnished to suit all classes"

Funeral cards supplied

business was small, although he did make his coffins in his Elgin Street premises. Metal nameplates for the coffins were square, with filigree edges. The name was painted, and when the paint dried, silver or gold flakes would be sprinkled on. The rivalry between the brothers was far greater than their licunity suggested:
ly of brothers who follow the occupation of
private life quite the reverse of what their
best.
evening to throw a party for a number of friends
in approaching their usual suburban hostelry, that
prepared to take the after-hours risk. For a
s were perplexed, but later a carriage of their
on to stop at their favourite inn and with all due
was admitted. When the cortège returned in
the casket was replete with liquid contents, and
the brothers returned to the happy atmosphere of the
mitted even a flimmer of a smile to break the
of gloom (4)."

business in Elgin Street never did build up to a
ith his brother's. Due to financial trouble and
uld not inject the necessary life into his business.
ed in 1922, and his property was bought by
Co., who installed a manager and continued the
ison's name.
Memorial to
ROBERT O'HARA BURKE
and
WILLIAM JOHN WILLS
The famous explorers

Memorial to
SIR CHARLES HOOTH
First Governor of Victoria
In Loving Memory

OUR DARLING.

ALMA LILIAN MILLS

Who Passed Away Oct. 29th 1910

Aged 9 Yrs. 9 Mos.

The Lord gave and the Lord has taken. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

This lovely bud so young and fair,
Called hence by early doom,
Just came to show how sweet a flower
In paradise would bloom.
Ere sin could harm or sorrow fade,
Death came with friendly care.
The opening bud to heaven conveyed,
And bade it blossom there.

Copyright
Fine Art Co., 47 Elgin St., Carlton, Melb.
5 - The Funeral Directors - The Allison's (Cont'd)

the venture was not a success and Sleight's later sold pety.
undertakers worked in the general Carlton area - but those ed below are those which research did not uncover anything :

ie - North Melbourne: the firm who brought back the bodies of nd Wills from Cooper's Creek.
ly, Corner Victoria and Spring Street. One of Melbourne's undertakers. His solely Catholic business deteriorated in the 's because he would not invest in motor vehicles. He died early 1930's, and did not pass on his business.

____________________________________________________________________________________
STEVE WELLINGTON - UNDERTAKER - Flemington Road

"Our publicity department never sleeps".

To those in bereavement; immediate attention

A phone call will bring us to your home in 5 minutes (5)

____________________________________________________________________________________
son's, Undertakers, North Fitzroy - near the football ground.
to W. G; Raven's in the late 1950's.
5 - The Funeral Directors (Cont'd)

- Funeral scheme in Carlton (see later in this chapter).
- Street for a short time. Really only an agency for under-

King - came to Melbourne from Geelong. Bought out a small
and started in Richmond.

the above-mentioned undertakers were only the result of
our Holdsworth's memory - and their beginnings and endings

FRI LAY

Fri lay was one of the real characters of the undertaking
Most funeral directors today remember him in terms of
as, and unfortunately little detail of his business is known.

It started in South Melbourne in the 1880's and later moved

wick, beside the St. Ignatious Church (6).

a malformed hip, and walked with a limp. He could play
as of musical instruments, and would put on charitable
ances and would "have 'em laying in the aisles". He would

the back rail of cabletrams, yelling out to people as he

and carrying on a loud conversation with the gripman.
Brunswick

Dear Sir,

Please hand to Mr. John Allison or his representative deeds of grave in the Brighton Cemetery or the Roman Catholic Parish, last used for the interment of Edward James Mortensen, on 24th November 1922, and collected by you from the Cemetery Office on 8/4/24.

[Signature]

Deed Received 21/4/24

W. Schotten
CHAPTER 5 - The Funeral Directors - Charles Friley (Cont'd)

There was a clergyman in the area who also walked with a hip - on the opposite leg. In the 1890's the Undertaker and Priest would often lead the cortege on foot - with the hilarious results. Friley would lead the procession for about a half-mile, then would pause on a corner and salute the funeral as it passed. However, he always made sure that he had stopped at a corner where there was a hotel. He would monopolise the phone for half an hour and buy the house a drink. He wore frock coat and top hat wherever he went. He did not have any family, and was bought out by Mulqueen's about 1:30. His most famous funeral notice appeared in "The Age", November 14th, 1928, for the late Mr. McNamara - an S.P. bookmaker.

"McNamara - The friends of the late Patrick McNamara are informed that his remains will be interred in the Coburg Cemetery. The funeral will leave his residence .... today at 3 o'clock. Three H.L.O. Golden gift - Date of drawing extended to third of December
CHAPTER 5 - The Funeral Directors (Cont'd)

JOSIAH HOLDSWORTH - UNDERTAKER

Josiah Holdsworth, R.N.*, arrived in Australia about 1874. He married the daughter of Edward William Allison. After E.W. Allison had suffered from ill-health for sometime, he sold his part of the undertaking business to Mr. J. Holdsworth. Mr. Holdsworth decided that there were already too many undertakers by the name of Allison (the other three brothers) and so he changed the name of the business to "Josiah Holdsworth, Furnishing Undertaker". The firm was passed on to their son Arthur, who in later years became prominent as Secretary of the Undertaker's State Association and Treasurer of the Federal body. See Photographs for the office movements of the business. Mr. Frank Holdsworth (Arthur's brother) had little association with the trade. Mr. Norman Holdsworth's (Arthur's son) took over the business at 376 Lygon Street from his father. Their present building site was an open common in Carlton's early days, then a market garden.

* Note: nearly all early information about the Holdsworth's is from Mr. Arthur Holdsworth, whose memory was excellent but naturally deficient in dates.
HOLDSWORTH'S FIRST HEAD OFFICE  -  1889.

366 LYGON STREET, CARLTON

Standing in the doorway are Mr. Josiah Holdsworth and Mrs. Holdsworth (nee Allison) holding their son Arthur, from whom much of the information for this Chapter was gained.
HOLDSWORTH'S SECOND ESTABLISHMENT  C. 1898

382 LYCON STREET, CARLTON

Note: Mourning coach for the transportation of the deceased's relatives.
HOLDSWORTH’S PRESENT HEADQUARTERS BOUGHT ABOUT 1908

376 - 380 LYCON STREET, CARLTON.
CHAPTER 5 - The Funeral Directors - Josiah Holdsworth (Cont'd)

John Daly, a City Undertaker already mentioned, financed the construction of the building. As a purely speculative venture, and built in 1906, it included two shops on either side and a pawnbroker's shop. Holdsworth bought it in 1906.

Horses were sometimes hired (in the early days) from A. A. Sleight's stables in Bourke Street, where the Tivoli is today. Mr. Rod Holdsworth (Josiah's son) is at present being trained to take over the business.

Two occurrences stand out in Mr. Arthur Holdsworth's memory:

A pneumonic influenza epidemic, about 1922, when state schools were full of victims, and the exhibition building was a vast hospital. The plague struck mostly adults. Holdsworth's often had to handle up to five funerals a day, as did most inner-city undertakers. So one needed stamina, and doctors seemed helpless. The eventual public attitude became "keep your belly full, your bowels open - and stop bloody well worried!"

An episode which Mr. Holdsworth hesitates to discuss was the extravagant funeral of Squizzy Taylor, murdered by an unknown hand.
CHAPTER 5 - The Funeral Directors - Josiah Holdsworth (Cont'd)

Mr. Taylor, a well-known murderer himself, was accorded a lavish funeral – gold ornamented coffin, white horses, drays full of flowers, a vast procession – with the police in full attendance.

When Mr. Holdsworth attempted to collect payment for his services, everyone denied knowing Squizzy Taylor – and Holdsworth was never paid.
CHAPTER 5 - The Funeral Directors (Cont'd)

BURIAL SOCIETIES

Burial Societies were organisations that a family joined - making weekly "pre-need" contributions to cover costs of inevitable funeral costs. Such societies generally specialised in certain religions.

Sixteen burial societies in Victoria have closed through financial trouble. Due to racketeering, permits for societies in Victoria are hard to obtain; not so in N.S.W., where such firms employ door-to-door salesmen.

One of the oldest surviving is the Jewish Burial Society (or Melbourne Chevra Kadisha) at the corner of Canning and Pitt Streets, Carlton, and was founded on 20th December, 1909.

In the early years religious laws were carried out through the direction of the Synagogue. The Society organise funerals and act as agents for funeral directors. The first board of Management for the Society was: P. Plastiki, President; Mr. S. Waxman, Vice President; Mr. M. Zeltner, Vice President; Mr. S. Rothberg, Treasurer; J.L. Jonas, Secretary.
CHAPTER 5 - The Funeral Directors - Burial Societies (cont'd)

Jews have always sought their burial grounds apart, even from the early days of the colony:

Mr. Hart, on behalf of the Society (the Society then had its headquarters in London), made an application to the authorities in Sydney, for a grant of land for a burial place for the Jewish denomination. In April 1843, the news came through by the overland mail that Sir George Gipps had acceded to the request.

The grant was one acre of land bordered by the Aboriginal Cemetery to the North, and the Wesleyans and Protestant Dissenters to the East and was situated where the Wholesale Fruit Market now stands in Queen Street (7).

The sudden increase in population caused by the gold rush called for an improvement in municipal facilities and in housing accommodation. As far back as January 1849 the editorial in the "Argus" advised the removal of the cemetery to another site because of the growing town, and a Bill providing for a new General Cemetery in Melbourne. 27 acres in extent, divided into several portions, of which the Jews were granted one acre. By the beginning of 1854 the new cemetery was ready for interments, and Tintel, Isaac Fulter and Solomon Phillips...
CHAPTER 5 - The Funeral Directors - Burial Societies (Cont'd)

were appointed as a sub-committee by the Congregation to make all arrangements for the closing of the old and opening the new burial ground (8).
FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Argus, 1/2/1897
2. Herald, 5/2/1897
3. The Observer, 11/2/1897
4. Herald, 19/4/1897
5. Argus, 25/6/1897
6. Age, 14/6/1897
7. Carlton Advertiser, 8/7/1897
8. These dates are extremely approximate and are as Mr. Arthur Holdsworth remembers them.

FOOTNOTES AFTER PAGE 31

1. Mr. Allison
2. Mr. Arthur Holdsworth
3. "Judy" - The war annual (holiday book) Printed and published by Edwards and Finn
5. Star Weekly, 1936
6. Mr. Mulqueen
8. idib. p. 90.
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TAPE RECORDINGS (see 'Acknowledgements')

Mr. John Allison
Mrs. Sebire
Mr. Fred Hawkins
Mr. M. Mulqueen
Mr. A. Holdsworth
Mr. G. Holdsworth
Mr. Tobias (Jewish Burial Society)

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AGE: 4/2/30; 14/6/1897; 7/7/1934.
NEWSPAPERS (Cont'd)

ARGUS: 1/2/1897; 25/6/1897; 14/11/1934; 6/8/1936; 12/2/1949;

TRUTH: 27/9/1941;

HERALD: 5/2/1897; 19/4/1897;

THE GAZETTE: 8/11/1867;

AUSTRALASIAN: 6/9/1894; 8/10/1895;

OBSERVER: 11/2/1897;

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JOURNAL

Journal of the Victorian Funeral Undertakers' Association
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Author/s: Thorp, Richard G.

Title: An historical survey: undertakers and cemeteries in the Carlton area

Date: 1967-09


Publication Status: Unpublished

Persistent Link: http://hdl.handle.net/11343/39073

File Description: An historical survey: undertakers and cemeteries in the Carlton area

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