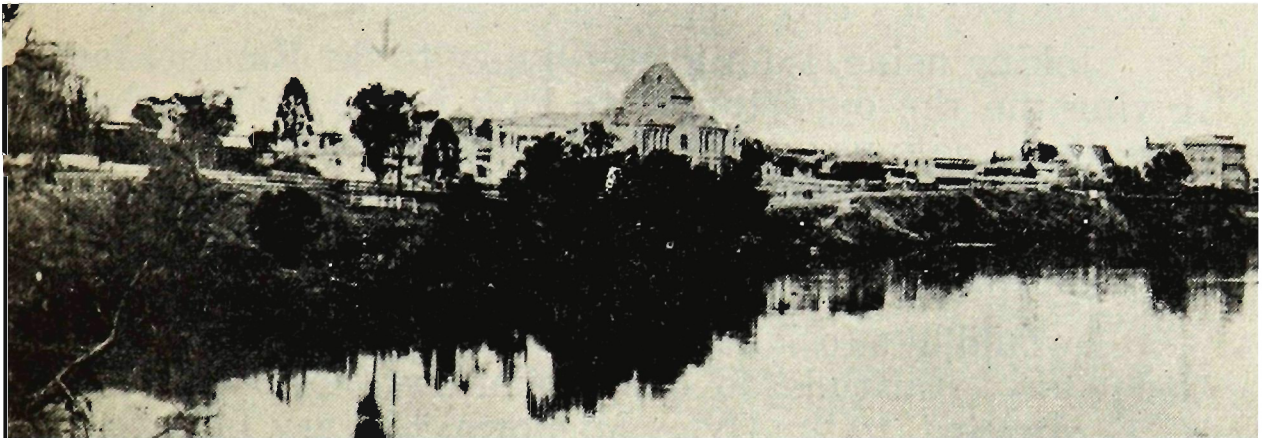


SOME INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE SITE OF BRISBANE'S EARLIEST BURIAL GROUND

[By J. C. H. GILL, B.A., LL.B.]

(Read at a meeting of the Society on 24 March 1960.)

During 1959 there was, of course, a great deal of research done into Brisbane's early days. As a result of this research a number of interesting mysteries emerged, due mainly to lack of documentation in the first place or else on account of the loss or dispersal of



what records there might have been dealing with a particular matter affecting the early settlement of Brisbane.

As a member of the Centenary Celebrations Historical Committee under the chairmanship of our President (Sir Raphael Cilento) I found myself on a Sub-Committee — Sir Raphael can be very persuasive — delegated to consider suitable sites connected with the early history of Brisbane for the erection of commemorative plaques as a Centenary Year project.

A suggestion was made to the Sub-Committee that the site of the first burials in Brisbane should be commemorated. This suggestion was favourably received and we even went so far as to consider suitable wording for the plaque. However, we also had to consider where the plaque was to be erected and that is where we struck our difficulty in October 1959.

Without doubt there had been some graves on North Quay, but were they isolated graves or part of an old general burial ground? Sir Raphael again used his powers of persuasion and I found myself delegated to solve the mystery. A month later I presented him with some rough notes and confessed that without a great deal of extra time and research I was not able to come up with an answer that would in any way be a solution or near solution of the mystery. He perused the notes and then said, "This is splendid. You had better carry on from this and prepare a paper for the Society, say next March." I found myself on the point of clicking my heels, saluting and saying, "Yes Sir, Captain Logan." However, here I am to-night to put before you the results of my inquiries and the conclusions which I feel I have justification in arriving at.

Joking aside, I am grateful now to Sir Raphael for giving me the opportunity to look into a matter that has, despite its usual grisly associations, come to be not without a certain fascination as it is amazing how much historical fact is to be found on or associated with graveyard memorials.

I would like to take this opportunity also to acknowledge my gratitude to our Honorary Librarian (Mr. C. G. Austin), to the Oxley Memorial Library Librarian (Mr. J. L. Pring) and to Mr. L. J. Duffy of the Survey Office. These gentlemen have found answers to most of my problems and Mr. Austin has also brought to my notice any relevant facts that he has come across in the course of his own general researches.

Although our investigations should actually commence in the year 1825 I feel that for the purposes of this paper we can more conveniently make 30 September 1913 our starting point. On that day Professor F. W. S. Cumbrae Stewart, the foundation Secretary of this Society, through the columns of the "Brisbane Courier," sparked off what might well be called the "Great Burial Ground Controversy."

I now give you his letter exactly as it was printed:

THE EARLY BURIAL GROUND

To the Editor

Sir,—A few days ago, in company with Captain South, I made an examination of the three gravestones now in the Toowong Cemetery, which, I understand,

were removed from North Quay about the year 1876.
We deciphered the inscriptions on the graves as follows:

1.

Sacred to the Memory of William Henry,
Son of Charles Roberts
Commissariat Department.

Departed this life 15th November 1831
Aged 5 years and 2 months

Before my infant heart could pray
The almighty word was given
To stop my pain and die away
Then mount my soul to heaven
Suffer little children to come
unto Me, for of such is
the Kingdom of Heaven.

2.

To the Memory of
Peter, son of Peter Macauley,
Private in His Majesty's 17th Regt. of Foot,
Who was accidentally drowned on 5th January
1832 aged 15 years and 8 months.

*A lovely boy possessed of every charm,
Could not thy tyrant's fatal dart disarm,
Engaging sweetness met the destined foe
And bid farewell to every human woe.
His spotless soul was to his God restored,
Bliss inconceivable his rich reward.
Then happy child my soul no more
Shall lost in poignant grief thy life deplore
But humbly hopeful through an almighty grace,
One day to fold thee in a sweet embrace.*

3.

Sacred to the memory of Jane Pittard,
Daughter of John Pittard
Late Color Sergeant of the 57th Regiment,
who departed this life January 23rd 1833
Aged 12 months and 13 days

The three graves are side by side at the foot
of the hill. There is another grave alongside,
enclosed by a wooden fence, with apparently no
stone to tell the name of the person buried there.

I have endeavoured to ascertain the exact spot where the gravestones originally stood on North Quay, but there seems to be a difference of opinion as to this. Perhaps some of your readers can give the information, and can say whether the nameless grave contains a body originally buried at North Quay.—I am, Sir, etc.,

F. W. S. CUMBRAE STEWART,
Historical Society of Queensland.

Sept. 29, 1913.

(According to "Early Days" (J. J. Knight) the burial ground was on the river bank, and ran from about Herschell Street for some distance towards Quay Street.—Ed. "B.C.")

Three Gravestones Located

In December last I located and inspected in Toowong Cemetery the three gravestones from which Professor Cumbrae Stewart took the above inscriptions. I found the Roberts inscription, originally well cut, on the flat top of a large catafalque type of memorial and very, very badly weathered. Only if you can get the right light, i.e. get the sun at an angle, can the inscription still be read. One notable point of difference is that Professor Cumbrae Stewart gives the scriptural quotation in a form different from that in which it actually appears on the stone, viz.: "Suffer little children and forbid them not to come unto me for of such is the Kingdom of God. Matthew XIX, XIV." In actual fact neither of the above agree with either the Douai or Authorised Versions of the Bible.

The McCauley inscription is rather more amateurishly cut on a large conventional upright stone and has weathered better on this account. Here again we find a discrepancy between the published version of the inscription and what is actually on the stone as regards the name and age of the child. I am in no doubt that the name is McCauley, not Macauley, and the age given on the stone is 5 years and 8 months (not 15 years and 8 months). In any event the verse inscribed is more appropriate to a child of tender years than a 15-year-old, for in those days a boy of that age was regarded as a young man.

I noted also the following errors in the transcription of the verse:

- line 2—"thy" instead of "the"
 line 5—"was" instead of "now"
 line 6—"inconceivable" instead of "inconceivable's"
 line 9—"hopeful" instead of "hope"
 "through" instead of "thro"
 line 10—"thee" instead of "the" (an obvious error
 of the stonemason's)

This grave also has a footstone with the initials "P.McC."

The Pittard inscription is beautifully cut (evidently by a master mason) on a conventional upright stone, but much smaller than the McCauley stone. Although local stone, like the others, it is lighter in colour and has weathered far better. This grave also has a footstone inscribed "J.P. 1833." In this case also there is a discrepancy—the date of death is printed as 23 January 1833 whereas it is in fact 29 January 1833.

Another point which I think I should clear up at this stage is the date when the memorials were taken from North Quay to Toowong Cemetery. Professor Cumbrae Stewart mentions 1876, and this has generally been accepted as right. However, in 1940 Mr. J. L. Melville, Overseer of the Toowong Cemetery, reported that the three old memorials we have been dealing with were removed from the river bank at North Quay and the bodies exhumed and re-interred at Toowong on 5 October 1881 under licence issued by the Home Secretary under date 23 August 1881. Mr. Melville's report is annexed to a letter dated 29 May 1940, from the Chief Inspector and Secretary, Department of Health, Brisbane City Council, and addressed to the Hon. Secretary, Oxley Memorial Library. Mr. Melville does not refer to a fourth exhumation and re-interment. Also the fence referred to by Professor Cumbrae Stewart no longer exists around any possible fourth grave. However, more of this later on.

The Issue Fogged

As I have already indicated Professor Cumbrae Stewart really started something with his letter and inquiry and between 30 September and 5 November 1913 no fewer than fourteen letters were published by the "Courier." I propose now to read these letters to you with appropriate comment at the end of each. I might mention with all respect to many of the "old-timers," who rushed into print on this matter, that

they really succeeded in fogging the issue. On a number of occasions I thought that I really had a point resolved when I would come across another "old-timer's" letter which would raise all sorts of doubts as to whether I had really settled the point in question at all. The north bank of the Brisbane River between Ann Street and the Grey Street Bridge appeared to have carried a number of graves with memorials that, like the Symplegades or Clashing Rocks in the tale of the Argonauts, drew apart or rushed together at will, intent on crushing in this case the poor seeker after knowledge of their true locations.

The first protagonist was a Mr. J. M. Davidson, of Stanley Street, South Brisbane, who on 3 October 1913 had the following to say:

THE EARLY BURIAL GROUND

To the Editor

Sir,—We are indebted to Mr. Cumbrae Stewart for copies of the inscriptions on the removed gravestones that are now located at Toowong, (1) Roberts, a child, (2) Macauley, a child, (3) Pittard, child of colour-sergeant. As to the unnamed fourth, I remember there was a fourth (if not more) on the river bank. It was within a wooden enclosing fence, and I think had a wooden tablet, with a painted name thereon, much faded. Three-fourths of the fence was enveloped in lantana. As to location: in the old days I was a rowing member of the Princess Rowing Club, and previously a cox. Their shed stood almost on the same spot as the present Commercial shed. The graves were not very far away therefrom, and consequently near the old hospital, which was near the present Supreme Court site. In my opinion the quoted inscriptions were the oldest; but there were others. The regiments, the 17th and the 57th, and the years 1831, 1832, and 1833 show the period as refers to the military. In 1863 a company of the 50th Regiment was here. They were succeeded by the 12th, and they left for New Zealand, perhaps in 1868, or thereabouts. Were they here when the Duke of Edinburgh was here in 1868? If Mr. Stewart could meet me some day I fancy I could take him to the old spot; and, perhaps the ground might, in its appearance, confirm my opinion. More might be said, but I refrain.

I am, sir, etc.,

J. M. DAVIDSON.

P.S.—Are we to suppose the last inscription, No. 3, is of two persons, or one; and if so which one? It reads: Sacred to the memory of Jane Pittard, daughter of John Pittard, late colour-sergeant of the 57th Regiment, who departed this life January 23, 1833 (the grammar means the child is dead, but the “who departed” might in a hurry be read the other way) as he was a “late.”

Stanley Street, Oct. 3, 1913.

Now you will observe two points emerge from Mr. Davidson's letter:

- (i) There was a fourth grave (or more) with a wooden tablet on which was painted a name very much faded.
- (ii) The children's graves as we shall now refer to them were located near the old Hospital, which was near the present Supreme Court site.
- (iii) As the graves and memorials were removed in 1881, and the Commercial Rowing Club was founded in 1875, he is recollecting something he observed at least 38 to 40 years earlier and to which at the time he apparently attached no particular significance.

On 7 October 1913 the “Courier” published a letter from Mr. A. R. McKellar, of the Survey Office, as follows:

Mr. A. R. McKellar (Survey Offices) writes:

Sir,—In reference to the inquiry of your correspondent re the position of the old Brisbane Cemetery on North Quay, I can remember the position quite distinctly, having seen the graves many times going to and from the Normal School. One grave in particular had a hardwood sawn paling fence around it, and bore an inscription relating to one of H.M. foot regiments. To describe the exact position now would be right opposite the boarding-house on North Quay called “Moiralan,” and between the bold rocks on the bank of the river and the present fence bounding the roadway, where there is now placed some resting seats under the trees. These same trees have, of course, been planted, and have grown up since then.

From Mr. McKellar we learn:

- (i) The old Brisbane Cemetery on North Quay was on the river bank opposite what is now "Moir-alan" and between the bold rocks on the bank and the (1913) roadway.
- (ii) One grave bore an inscription relating to one of H.M. Foot Regiments.
- (iii) He is recollecting something seen as a school-boy over 30 years before, but which had no particular importance for him.

On the same day that Mr. McKellar's remarks were published, the "Courier" also published the following communication from Mr. Thomas Illidge with the result of inquiries of its own arising out of Mr. Illidge's information:

THE OLD BURIAL GROUND

Mr. Thos. Illidge writes:

Sir,—Seeing in the "Courier" a letter from F. W. S. Cumbrae Stewart, re the three tombstones taken from the North Quay, I beg to inform that gentleman that the original site of those three stones was right opposite the home of the Jeays family (now "Moir-alan"), not quite half-way down the slope, between Dowridge's boatshed and the big rock. I may mention that I was there the morning the remains were dug up by Mr. D. Hannah, of Paddington, who is still alive, and can vouch for the truth of this. The remains were dug up on account of a survey for a tramline right along the river bank round the gardens, wharves, etc. I also remember the old cemetery (the site of the Helidon Spa Co.). I have seen graves dug up there, and the skulls and bones taken from where they were digging the old gaol drain."

Mr. Hannah Interviewed

The "Courier," acting on the above letter, had Mr. David Hannah, Rosalie, interviewed. Mr. Hannah arrived in Moreton Bay when a child of about four years of age, and has spent the remaining 61 years of his life here, while for many years he was occupied in cemetery work. Further than that, he was always in close touch with, and, in fact, worked with his father, the late Mr. John Hannah, who, as far back as 50 years or thereabouts ago, was in the employ of the late Mr. John Petrie, and who had much to do with the ceme-

teries of those days. Mr. John Hannah died about 13 years ago, at the age of 82 years, and was employed for years at the old Petrie Terrace (or Paddington) Cemetery, and later at Toowong Cemetery, and together with his son, had to do at various times with the removal of remains from the old North Quay burial ground. Mr. David Hannah has, only lately, been employed at the Paddington Cemetery, in connection with the disinterments, and his knowledge of the burials there has led to his help being sought by relatives and others in discovering the last resting place of many of Brisbane's old-time citizens. In his conversation with a "Courier" reporter, Mr. Hannah could not quite define the boundary of the old North Quay Cemetery on the city or bridge side. He did not think that it extended as far as Herschell Street, as had been suggested by some. It was, he said, a comparatively small area, and naturally so, for the wants of the little community did not demand a very large God's acre. Bounded by the river bank on the one side, the cemetery, Mr. Hannah thinks, extended back to about the spot where Messrs. Carrick's Ltd. factory and offices now stand in Saul Street, and closely abutting on to what is now Upper Roma Street. While the ground could have extended for some distance around what is now North Quay, it could not have embraced an area to the south-east beyond what is now the Railway Hotel, at the corner of Roma and Makerston Streets, for here there was a deep gully, which as far as he can remember, took its rise somewhere in the vicinity of Albert Park, near where the Grammar School stands, and ran through the orphanage grounds and the property occupied by the Tramways Company's sheds. After passing through the land occupied by the hotel the creek, or gully, ran under Sleath's bridge, and followed a course which now would be near where Sleath's musical instrument and McKenzie's boot shops are. It crossed George Street near where Messrs. Cannon and Cripps' office is, through the land now used as saleyards by Messrs. L. E. Walker and Co., then down to Creek Street, and entered the river in the vicinity of the Queen's Hotel. About 25 years ago Mr. Hannah assisted in the removal of headstones from a point on the river bank directly opposite Netherway. These stones were taken to Toowong Cemetery, where they now are. Mr. Hannah fancies that the boundary

of the cemetery farthest from the city was at a spot just about where the Spa Company's factory now stands in Skew Street, but it was possible, he said, that it was beyond that point and near the old house known as Eaglecliff. In support of this he mentions that when a drain was being constructed from the old gaol on Petrie Terrace (now used as a police depot) to the river, a quantity of human bones were disinterred, and were reinterred in another cemetery. This drain, Mr. Hannah says, entered the river at a point at or near where the retaining wall was constructed during Alderman Hipwood's term as mayor. An inspection of the vicinity shows that at present there are two small drains running into the river. One issues from the wall at the end farthest from the city, the other is a few yards on this side of the structure. The latter seems to be the one most probably identical with that mentioned by Mr. Hannah, and, if so, it would fix the western boundary of the cemetery at a spot beyond the block occupied by the Helidon Company and within a few yards of Edgecliff.

Some Valuable Clues

Mr. Illidge's remarks and the "Courier's" subsequent interview with Mr. David Hannah, followed by on the spot investigation (how the Press has slipped from grace since then!), give us the following facts:

- (i) The children's graves were right opposite Moiralan.
- (ii) The site of the old cemetery covered (probably) an area bounded on the west by the western side of what is now Eagle Terrace, on the north by Upper Roma Street and a line across Saul Street about the present site of Carricks, thence certainly no further east at the very most than Makerston Street (in any case not near its junction with Roma Street on account of the gully), and on the south by the river bank from at the furthest Makerston Street to Eagle Terrace.
- (iii) We know that Mr. Hannah was about seven years out as to the time the children's graves were removed (1881 and not 1888), but whilst he is diffident about expressing views as to the actual boundaries of the Old Burial Ground he

comes up with some valuable clues which, as I will show you later on, must result in his getting credit for not being far off a correct account of the site of the Old Burial Ground.

The next protagonist is "Combo" of Cleveland, and his letter, published by the "Courier" on 11 October 1913, says:

THE OLD BURIAL GROUND

"COMBO" (Cleveland) writes:

Sir,—About that old burial ground: In the late 'fifties we used to attend St. John's School, which was situated at the back of where the Longreach Buildings now are. One of the scholars was Thomas Langtree, who lives on Bowen Hills at the present time, and I believe still works with horse and dray on the council. His father was buried in that old ground, and on that account we often visited the place when the school was released for dinner. The burial ground proper was on the flat towards where the gaol was afterwards built, and had no connection with the isolated graves on the river bank, which were between the present boatshed and a prominent rock up the stream.

"Combo" agrees substantially with Messrs. Illidge and Hannah, and he has a specific reason for remembering visits to the Old Burial Ground, although they took place around fifty-five years before. My view is that where you have some definite association with a place you remember it far better than where, even though you may see it daily over a period of time, there is nothing with which you can associate it.

On 13 October 1913 the "Courier" published further letters from "Learner" and Mr. B. G. Joyner, of Gladstone, respectively, under the general heading of "The Old Burial Ground":

THE OLD BURIAL GROUND

"Learner" writes: Sir,—Will "Combo" of Cleveland, and Thomas Langtree, of Bowen Hills, supply lists of names of any persons buried on the river bank or the Skew Street burial grounds, and if possible aid in the discovery of any pictures of tombstones?

Mr. B. G. Joyner (Gladstone) writes:

Sir,—Re the letters on "Early Burial Grounds." There is a slight mistake as regards the 12th and 50th

Regiments. In 1863 a detachment of the 12th Foot was in Brisbane under the command of Lieutenant Seymour and Ensign Britten. In 1866, the right wing of the 50th Regiment left New Zealand for Sydney under the command of Colonel Waddy, and relieved a detachment of the 12th Foot, and also the detachment at Brisbane.

In 1868, the war with the natives of New Zealand was practically over as in 1867 the troops were being withdrawn. In 1866, I was stationed at Tauranga (New Zealand) with my regiment (12th Foot) and helped to assist the detachment of the 12th from Brisbane to disembark. At that time there were no wharves at Tauranga. The steamer came close to the shore, and then the men were transhipped into punts and from them were either carried ashore by us or else waded through the water to dry land. If a Mr. Chaill or a Mr. Croft, who was in the P.O. at Brisbane and belonged to the 12th, are alive they could tell you the date they left for New Zealand. I belonged to the 12th and served in the Regiment during part of the war. I also am in possession of the war medal.

These throw no further light on the problem. However, on 14 October 1913, Professor Cumbrae Stewart returned to the field with a mass of information which we must now consider:

THE EARLY BURIAL GROUND

To the Editor

Sir,—By the courtesy of Mr. Reinhold, of the Survey Branch, I have been shown several old maps of the city area preserved in the Lands Office. Three of these fix the exact spot of the burial ground mentioned by your correspondents. They are:

1. A proposed plan of the town of Brisbane by Henry Wade, surveyor 1842. This shows the burial ground as situated between the site of the old gaol and the river.

2. A plan of the burial grounds situated near Brisbane in the county of Stanley by Henry Wade, surveyor 1843. This plan refers to the old Paddington Cemetery, and shows the burial ground as in No. 1.

3. A plan showing the several allotments and sections 18, 20, 21 and 23 "transmitted to the Surveyor-General, with my letter and description dated October

19, 1851. Chas. G. Roberts authorised surveyor." This plan shows the old burial ground across the front of Saul Street and the boundary on the city side running along the middle of Skew Street.

I was unable to find any plan or record of the original survey, if any, of this burial ground. It is, however, certain that there was an early burial ground at Skew Street. In company with Messrs. W. E. Graham and P. P. Fewings, both of whom have a distinct recollection of the graves in their original position, I have visited the site of the graves as described by your correspondents, Messrs. J. M. Davidson and Illidge. I have received several private letters and visits from old colonists, such as Mr. J. Ruthning, Mrs. H. W. Fox and others, and I am satisfied that your correspondents are correct in fixing the site of the graves on the river bank in front of Moiralin. Therefore, it is clear that they were not in the Skew Street burial ground, nor in any burial ground of which I can find any record.

An Earlier Burial Ground?

But was there an earlier burial ground?

Mr. J. Ruthning tells me that there was a burial ground between North Quay and Roma Street and that Makerston Street now runs over the site of it. The Friends' Meeting House and the National Harvester Company are said to have been on the site, and Mr. Ruthning says he remembers human remains being unearthed there in 1863, and that the burial ground drained into the reservoir.

Mrs. H. W. Fox, who has been in Brisbane for the last 50 years, tells me that there used to be a burying ground on the other side of the road from the soldiers' children's graves, which she remembers distinctly, and that this was said to be the convicts' graveyard. Mrs. Fox thinks that there is now a large building of some kind on the spot, but at one time there was a house built by Mr. Austin, at that time Government Surveyor, and Mrs. Fox was told by her late husband (an old resident of 60 years, at one time draftsman in the Survey Office, and later in the Geological Survey Office) that when digging the foundations they removed the bodies. Mrs. Fox believes that this house is still standing at the corner of Herschell Street and North Quay.

In a Jubilee History of Queensland, published in 1909, there is a plan or sketch of Brisbane made by a Mr. Gerler in 1844. This shows a burial ground close to the old hospital, now Supreme Court, on North Quay. If this plan, and the memories of my informants are correct, there was a burial ground still earlier than that at Skew Street. It is quite possible that there were separate burial grounds for the convicts, the aborigines, and the authorities in the old days.

I noticed in the plan No. 2 of the burial grounds at Paddington that there was a separate place for aboriginals and I recollect that, in the registers of the parish church of St. Andrew's at Brighton, in Victoria, there are columns ruled off for "bond" and "free." These registers go back to about 1839 or 1840. It is possible that these distinctions were maintained even in that common lot which falls to all men. Perhaps some of your correspondents can say if there is anything in the suggestion that Skew Street was not Brisbane's earliest burial ground.

And now another matter. Mr. J. Ruthning tells me that as a boy, about 1865, he saw All Saints' Church being built, and that there are gravestones in the vault under the church. Canon Jones tells me that he went to All Saints' shortly after it was finished, but never heard of any graves there. Skew Street burial ground had gone before Canon Jones's time, and the burial grounds at Paddington are the earliest cemeteries which he recollects. Do any of your correspondents know of any interment at All Saints?

Very interesting points are raised by your correspondents, but time will not allow me to say more. The Historical Society is evidently going to have lots of work to do.—I am, sir, etc.,

F. W. S. CUMBRAE STEWART.

The University,

October 13, 1913.

(We have received an interesting sketch of the locality of the graves from Mr. A. R. McKellar, but unfortunately it will not reproduce. We have, however, been favoured with a photograph by Mr. H. A. Jones, which though faint may throw some light on the subject.—Ed. "B.C.")

Some Positive Evidence

We now have some positive evidence in the shape of:

- (i) Surveyor Wade's Plans of 1842 and 1843 which both show the site of a burial ground in the vicinity of Skew Street.
- (ii) Surveyor Robert's Plan of 1851 which again shows a burial ground sited in the vicinity of Skew Street.
- (iii) Mr. Gerler's sketch plan of Brisbane Town made in 1844 which shows a burial ground close to the old Hospital on North Quay.

Evidence of not so positive a nature comes from:

- (i) Mr. J. Ruthning, who says there was a burial ground extending over the area now crossed by Saul and Makerston Streets which drained into the town water supply and from which he remembers remains being taken in 1863. This burial ground would be to the north-east of that tentatively described by Mr. Hannah and instead of Makerston Street being only a possible eastern boundary it runs over the site.
- (ii) Mrs. H. W. Fox, with a convicts' burial ground on what is now the site of Netherway across the road from the children's graves. Her late husband told her that when digging the foundations of Netherway or the building that preceded it, at some unspecified date, the bodies were removed. Mrs. Fox is in fact giving us hearsay evidence.

On 16 October 1913, the "Courier" published further letters as follows:

THE EARLY BURIAL GROUNDS

"Sixty Years a Queenslander" writes:

Sir,—Some difference of opinion seems to exist as to the exact site of the monumental stone which in earlier years marked the spot known to old residents as the "Soldiers' graves." This diversity of opinion is, of course, quite natural, as during the last few years surface appearances have changed or become obliterated. In the 'fifties and 'sixties of last century much of the river frontage along the North Quay was covered with a tangled growth of lantana, which could only be

penetrated by a bird-nesting boy or a billygoat. As the former, I have often "worked my passage" through this scrub, and my memory fixes the site of the graves as about midway between Tank and Herschell Streets and just above a prominent rock which here rises abruptly out of the river.

Mr. H. A. Jones writes: Sir,—In "Pugh's Almanac" for 1863 occurs the following entry: "May 22, 1862. The Church of England cemetery and mortuary chapel near the Green Hills, Brisbane, consecrated by Bishop Tufnell." What ground does this refer to? I cannot recall a Brisbane cemetery possessing a mortuary chapel.

Miss Constance Petrie writes: Sir,—In reply to Mr. Cumbrae Stewart's inquiry of October 14, re the early burial ground, I quote, for those interested, the last paragraph in my book, "Tom Petrie's Reminiscences." The information was given me by my father: "Milton (or Paddington) graveyard seems a thing of the past now, but there was a cemetery older still. It was on the opposite side of the street to where the coal shoots (chutes) are now at Roma Street Station. There the prisoners and soldiers were buried. Before that again North Quay had been used, but not sufficiently to be called a cemetery. When the place at Roma Street was disused, four or five men were set to dig up the graves, and the bones were moved to Milton. One of these men (his companions related afterwards), a little stout Irishman, coming to a coffin lid raised it, and exposure to the air caused an old grey cap on the skeleton to fall to pieces. Throwing up his hands, the frightened Pat exclaimed, as he recovered himself: 'My good soul, keep your cap on; I'm a poor man like yourself.' This Pat, it was said, used to take the coffin boards home to his cottage in the Valley and with them he put up a fine skillion. The boards were cedar, and quite sound, although some had been underground for a number of years. And so the big place we now call the Valley had its beginning."

Site of Children's Graves

"Sixty Years a Queenslander" has, as I will later prove, given us the almost exact site of the children's graves, although for some reason they had become known as the "Soldiers' Graves."

Mr. Jones does not help matters, but Miss Petrie, who is quoting from page 316 of her book, confirms the location of the burial ground in the vicinity of Skew Street, but discounts the suggestion that North Quay was elsewhere used other than for some isolated burials. She is, of course, quoting from her father's memories and recollections, and thus her evidence could be classified as hearsay. However, it is hearsay with a difference in that Tom Petrie was a born observer—nothing seems to have failed to interest him, and everything he saw at every place he visited had some association for him, all of which he faithfully passed on to his daughter, who acted as his amanuensis.

Next we have a Mrs. Lucy Sonnenschein whose letter was published on 20 October 1913:

THE EARLY BURIAL GROUNDS

Lucy Sonnonschein (nee Wynn) writes from Warwick:

13/10/13.

Sir.—I would like to add my recollections to the above question. The old burial grounds were situated opposite the present Roma Street goods shed gates. After the burial ground was removed, the land was built upon and occupied by Davies (Davis) the Jew, Joseph Jeyes, Bill and Joe Jewell, carpenters, Joshua Peter Bell, and Bulger, a wine merchant. New shops have replaced these dwellings. This burial ground was known as the "Soldiers' Graves." On the bank of the river in North Quay there was a large vault, opposite Paddy Pacey's milking yard, which marked the spot where some officer was buried. My father used to turn the cows into the burial ground at night to graze and remove them at 5 a.m. to milk them.

Mrs. Sonnenschein rather agrees with Mr. Ruthning, but she also talks of the "Soldiers' Graves," which other correspondents have located on North Quay opposite Moiralan, as being the name for the Old Burial Ground. I have been unable to locate the exact site of Paddy Pacey's milking yard, but rather suspect the large vault may have been the large catafalque type of memorial over the Roberts child's grave.

The next to enter the fray was Mr. G. L. Board, who was then Assistant Under Secretary, Department

of Public Lands, and who at that time was directing the operations covering the closure of the old Paddington Cemeteries and their conversion into what is now Lang Park. Mr. Board's letter, published in the "Courier" on 29 October 1913, says:

EARLY BURIAL GROUNDS

Mr. G. L. Board writes from Careenya, South Brisbane:

Sir,—I find that I can throw further light on the subject of the sites of the original burial grounds around Brisbane. The first site was the soldiers' graves (two), which were opposite the high rock, and in a line with the corner of Netherway. This site I knew well, as I lived for several years at Riversleigh and saw these graves daily. The next site adjoined Roma Villa, and embraced part of Eagle Terrace and the whole of Skew Street. This information is given in a survey plan signed by Henry Wade, April 26, 1842, and is further proved by the original survey plan of Roma Street, which shows the corner of the old burial ground in the position described. I have also consulted Mr. C. S. Miles, an old friend and schoolmate at Shaw's Collegiate School in the 'sixties, and he confirms this position. Another old cemetery in South Brisbane is shown on Wade's plan as on the site of the West End State School.

However, Mr. Board speaks of only two graves on what I think we can now regard as the site generally regarded as being the site of the children's graves. Also, at the time he lived at Riversleigh he had no occasion to inform himself as to whose the graves really were, and from what "Sixty Years a Queenslander" says lantana made the graves pretty inaccessible. Mr. Board agrees with some of the other correspondents on the Skew Street site, and, as you will see, later gives almost exactly the boundaries of the Old Burial Ground.

The last two letters published by the "Courier" appeared on 5 November 1913, the first being from a Mr. A. E. Campbell of Rockhampton:

THE OLD BURIAL GROUND

To the Editor

Sir,—On looking through your good old "Courier" of the 25th instant, I see you are having a little con-

troverſy re burial grounds in Brisbane. I ſhould like to put you and many more right in that line. Miſs Petrie has had a try, but has failed like many more to locate ſeveral old ſpots in and about the old city. I have been in and out of Brisbane ſince 1846, ſo I ought to know one ground at leaſt — the Presbyterian — where my parent was put to reſt in the year 1853. But firſt, the ſoldier's grave. I ſee you have a ſketch of it in the "Courier" of the 25th inſtant. Yes, that is about the ſpot, only high up, about ten yards from the fence, and there is a high ſtone face projecting towards the river. It was made of five large ſtone ſlabs. It was the grave of an officer who went out riding and his horſe carried him againſt a tree and broke his neck. I think his name, or the name on the top ſlab, was "Lawſon." The tomb muſt have been ſhifted in the early 'ſixties. The bottom end near the river was broken, and it acted as a cave. Many a one ſlept there for the night, for it was a coſy camp for a cold night. About 200 or 300 yards further up there was a brick wharf built by the ſoldiers. It was called the ſoldiers' fishing wharf. By following the river up about a quarter of a mile on your right, where the Spa Works are now, was the old cemetery, called the ſoldiers' burial ground. Other burial grounds were on the right-hand ſide of the railway line, on the fall of the hill, and called the Milton Cemeteries. There were four—Presbyterian, Catholic, Methodiſt, and one other. There was no other cemetery for North Brisbane until Toowong was opened. A lot of remains were removed to Toowong from the above graveyards. I tried to locate my father's grave, but could not; the place had been ſo much abuſed by cattle and horſes and people taking away the fences for their own private uſe, while the gravestones were broken into pieces. I could not find what I deſired. Miſs Petrie gives a little idea of what was done there with coffin lids, etc. I do not think it was ſo bad as that, but I know the fences from around the graves were taken to adorn ſome of the private places about Petrie Terrace and Milton.—

I am, ſir, etc.,

A. E. CAMPBELL.

Rockhampton,

October 25, 1913.

Apocryphal?

Mr. Campbell again clouds the issue by referring to the "Soldier's Grave" on the location of the children's graves. Although Mrs. Sonnenschein has also spoken of an officer's burial vault, it seems to me that once again the large stone box erected over the unfortunate Roberts child's grave has become associated with an apocryphal story. I might mention that the slab on the downhill side of the box in its present position at Toowong shows signs of coming adrift from the rest and this could quite easily have happened whilst it was on North Quay. I can find no mention in any other source of a large or impressive vault or catafalque type memorial associated with the children's grave site on North Quay. Mr. Campbell locates the old cemetery called the "Soldiers' Burial Ground" on the Skew Street site.

The second and last letter published on 5 November 1913 was from a wickedly dogmatic "old-timer" who signed himself as "Samsonvale." He says:

I arrived in Brisbane in the early 1860's. I have a clear recollection of the Soldiers' Cemetery on North Quay. It was situated right on the bank of the river as nearly as possible right behind the site of the present Supreme Court Building and definitely no further from Queen Street. It was fenced off from the road and the inscriptions could be clearly read from the road. The cemetery was very small, being under half an acre in size, and it was in a very neglected and dilapidated state. An old neighbour of mine who landed in Brisbane in the 'fifties picks the same spot as I do; bullock teams used to camp there prior to crossing the river by the punt ferry at nearly the same place as the present bridge is built.

To say "Samsonvale's" effort was irritating is putting it mildly. Here was a brand new Aunt Sally to knock over just when everything else was falling neatly into place with the help of the available positive evidence. However, further evidence that subsequently came to hand will enable me to deal suitably with "Samsonvale."

Examining the Evidence

With "Samsonvale's" contribution the correspondence appears to have closed. What has come out of it?

Let us work along the river bank from Queen Street to Eagle Terrace. We find:

- (i) The Soldiers' Cemetery behind the Supreme Court (Samsonvale).
- (ii) The children's graves, near the Supreme Court site (Davidson).
- (iii) The old Brisbane Cemetery right opposite Moiralan (McKellar).
- (iv) The children's graves opposite Moiralan (Illidge, Combo, Mrs. Fox and "Sixty Years a Queenslander").
- (v) The convicts' burial ground across the road from the children's graves (Mrs. Fox).
- (vi) Two soldiers' graves on North Quay in line with the corner of Netherway (Board).
- (vii) Officers' vault on North Quay at site of children's graves (Mrs. Sonnenschein and Campbell).
- (viii) Isolated graves on North Quay (Miss Petrie).
- (ix) A burial ground between North Quay and Roma Street opposite present railway station and extending from Makerston Street to Saul Street and including both those streets (Ruthning and Mrs. Sonnenschein).
- (x) A burial ground in the vicinity of Skew Street (Illidge, Hannah, "Brisbane Courier," Combo, Miss Petrie, Board and Campbell).
- (xi) A burial ground from about Herschell Street for some distance towards Quay Street (Knight).

We will now take our leave of 1913 and go back to 1825.

In February of the latter year the settlement at Brisbane was established after an abortive attempt to establish a settlement at Redcliffe in September 1824. Although Oxley was present in a supervisory capacity of sorts Lieutenant Miller was in charge of the settlement. He had with him his wife and family, a storekeeper and one assistant storekeeper, a detachment of 14 men of the 40th and some 30 convicts. In 1825, Captain Logan of the 57th (Middlesex) Regiment of Foot became Commandant of the infant settlement, and Major R. W. J. Smith, M.B.E., the Curator of The

Middlesex Regimental Museum, reports that in 1828 the distribution of the 57th throughout Australia included a detachment at Moreton Bay consisting of Captain Logan, Lieutenant Bainbridge (Act. Engineer), 3 Sergeants, 1 Drummer and 76 rank and file. The regiment left Australia for Indian service at intervals between 2 March and 24 August 1831, minus, of course, Captain Logan (killed in 1830) and Colour Sergeant Pittard, who must have taken his discharge in Moreton Bay, unhappily to lose his infant daughter there in January 1833. It is reasonable to infer that the 17th Regiment replaced the 57th, and Private McCauley must have been a member of the detachment of the 17th posted to Moreton Bay, and during his service here his young son Peter was accidentally drowned. Nothing is presently known of Charles Roberts who lost his infant son, William Henry, from sickness in November 1831, but I have noticed that a Charles Roberts was buried in the Baptist section of the old Paddington or Milton cemeteries and his memorial was moved in 1913 into the reserve behind Christ Church, Milton, with 504 other memorials. To-day, there are only 20 memorials behind Christ Church, and perhaps someone might like to look into the matter of what has happened to the other 485 memorials, including that of Charles Roberts.

Unhappy Early Years

The early years of the infant settlement were not happy ones. As late as 1829, Governor Darling was expressing an intention to move Brisbane towards the sea, as the settlement water supply was fouled and sickness was rife. This leads to the permissible inference that the death-roll of the settlement must have been heavy—especially when we consider the then current attitude towards personal hygiene, community sanitation, and sources and treatment of town water supplies, the lack of medical knowledge, and lastly, the lack of regard for the welfare of convicts and army other ranks. In point of fact, the latter, who barely twenty years before had been referred to by the Duke of Wellington as “the scum of the earth,” were little better treated than the convicts they were set to guard. We must also take into account the personality of Captain Logan, an able officer and administrator, but a martinet who was ruthless in his use of the lash and treadmill for the slightest offence. All of these factors must have

taken toll of the lives of men who were ill-fed and worked beyond their strength to start with. However, despite the casualness of the age towards health and hygiene, Logan was a Peninsula veteran, and I do not think for one minute he would have selected, or permitted the selection of, a site for a burial ground that would drain into the settlement's water supply. Wellington's officers had at least learnt that corpses and water supplies did not mix during their campaigning in Portugal and Spain.

There does not appear to be any surviving plan of Brisbane town contemporaneous with Logan's regime, nor during that of his successor Captain Clunie. In 1839, however, Major Barney prepared a plan of Brisbane Town which shows a track (now North Quay) leading towards a burial ground somewhere off the map. In the "Brisbane Courier" of 17 December 1921 is an article entitled "Brisbane in 1839" by S. Emmett which refers to Assistant Surveyor Robert Dixon's Field Notes of 17 July 1839, which locates the burial ground at "the river end of Saul Street."

Dixon's 1840 Plan

The Survey Office, Department of Public Lands, Brisbane, has a Plan (No. M.T.3) of Brisbane Town signed by Robert Dixon and dated 24 March 1840. This shows an area of approximately 1 acre (dimensions 2 chains on the Roma Street side, 5.6 chains on the Saul Street side, 2.2 chains on the river side and 4.8 chains on the Eagle Terrace side) designated as a burial ground and covering the Skew Street-Helidon Spa Co. area, and thus vindicates Illidge, Hannah, Combo, Board, Campbell, Miss Petrie, and the "Courier."

The points of particular interest in this plan are the following:

(i) It shows a saw pit $3\frac{3}{4}$ chains long by $\frac{1}{4}$ chain wide, just where Davidson says the children's graves were located, and extending into the area where "Samsonvale" says the "Soldiers' Cemetery" was located. I think the authorities, even though they had convict labour at their disposal, would hardly have put the settlement's saw pit into what was apparently the most convenient place and then proceeded to place graves around it or between it and the nearby lumber yard.

(ii) At a point on the river bank a little more than halfway between the beginning of Queen Street and the burial ground Dixon shows two small squares which I believe surveyors then habitually used to indicate isolated graves. When you superimpose the existing streets on to Dixon's plan these symbols are on the river side of North Quay and almost in line with the eastern corner of Herschell Street and North Quay. I think I am safe in saying he had indicated the site of the children's graves—in fact doubly safe, as the Society has a photograph taken, as far as can be ascertained, in 1876 which shows the memorials over the children's graves in situ on North Quay, and there is no doubt as to their being located above the prominent rocky bank rising straight out of the river, which is just in front of Netherway. You can clearly see the box-like tomb of the Roberts child, whilst the other stones can also be distinguished, the whole being enclosed by a rail fence. The Anglo-Saxons and the Celts are funny people. Even when at their most merciless they can get very sentimental about the small and the defenceless. No doubt children were few in number in the small settlement, and when little William Henry Roberts died (possibly one of the first children to die here), it was no doubt felt that it was not fitting that his last resting place should be amongst a lot of convicts and brutal soldiers, so they picked the best site they could with a pleasant outlook outside the immediate confines of the settlement, and in due course also buried the infants McCauley and Pittard there, plus it appears, another youngster, who joins the great legion of lost children because he could only have a wooden slab over him and not a stone memorial.

At Toowong Cemetery there were actually four graves provided for the children's memorials and remains, but only three were used. The cemetery records show no fourth re-burial—not even of an unknown person. It is permissible, I think, to infer that the remains of the fourth child could not be located by the exhumation party and consequently the fourth grave provided at Toowong was never used.

For reasons I will give you in a few minutes, I think we can dismiss McKellar's claim that the old Brisbane Cemetery was opposite Moiralan, together with the claim by Mrs. Fox that the convict burial ground

was across the road from the children's graves. We can, on the other hand, allow the claims of Illidge, Combo, "Sixty Years a Queenslander," and Mrs. Fox that the children's graves were opposite Moiralan, as I believe this antedated Netherway, and would accordingly be for them the nearest datum point—let us say we concede them a near miss. The claims of Board, Campbell, and Mrs. Sonnenschein relative to soldiers' graves and an officer's sepulchral vault also fall before the evidence of Dixon's plan and the photograph I have referred to.

(iii) Dixon's plan does not purport to show what will be—it shows what existed in 1840. It is, as far as we know, the first survey of the settlement by the civil authorities. In 1840 the settlement was moving into the transition period between the penal stage and the era of free settlement. Seemingly, it was Dixon's duty to show the layout of the settlement for others to plan future settlement from there. Therefore, I consider what he showed as the burial ground was, in fact, the only burial ground of the settlement, as he took the trouble to indicate separately the isolated graves on North Quay. My supporting evidence follows shortly.

Henry Wade's Plans

The Lands Department also hold Surveyor Henry Wade's Plans (Nos. M.T.6 and B.1182.1), being a proposed Plan of The Town of Brisbane dated 26 April 1842 and a Plan of Brisbane Town Allotments also made in the year 1842. With these plans, we arrive at the stage of preparation for free settlement. Using Dixon's survey of what the existing layout of the town was, Wade plans for the future. You all know what Governor Gipps did to his plans as regards city squares and street widths, but one thing left untouched was the provision for new and larger burial grounds for the various religious denominations at Milton, later known as the Milton or Paddington Cemeteries. In each plan, Wade still showed the Old Burial Ground at Skew Street, but he ignored the children's graves on the river bank.

In Mr. G. L. Board's report dated 11 June 1914 to the Minister for Lands on the closure of the Paddington Cemeteries and their conversion into Lang Park, he refers to the earliest memorials found there, with one

exception, as dating from 1844, which indicates that the Skew Street burial ground was closed from that year on. The exception, I might mention, was a stone which was inscribed "William Davey, Native of Birmingham, Died Jan. 27th, 1838." I think this can be satisfactorily explained by a cutting from the "Courier" of 18 March 1864. It states that the Improvement Committee of the Brisbane Municipal Council recommended "that parties be permitted to remove graves from that portion of Roma Street near the gaol which will be marked out to them by the clerk of works." The progress of the city required the removal of the Old Burial Ground, and it follows that a number of memorials would be transferred to Milton, although by then the Council was clamouring for the closure of these cemeteries also, but it was to be another eleven years before this came to pass.

Editorial Denunciation

I still have to complete my proof that the Skew Street area was the site of Brisbane's oldest burial ground, so I will now read you two pieces of rather delightful mid-nineteenth century journalese culled from the first and second issues of the "Moreton Bay Courier."

Here we have an editorial denunciation from "The Moreton Bay Courier," Vol. 1, No. 1, published on Saturday, 20 June 1846:

THE OLD BURIAL GROUND

Perhaps there is no position more unpalatable for a public writer to be placed in than that in which it is his duty to censure the community with whom he makes acquaintance for the first time. In addressing the inhabitants of Brisbane, through the columns of their local newspaper, it would be our wish as well as our interest to greet them with a flattering notice of their many good qualities—of their regard for and attention to the decencies of life. In this dilemma there is only one course open to us and we trust our readers will give us credit for sincerity of motive in offering to their consideration a few remarks on the present disgraceful state of the old Burial Ground in North Brisbane.

The neatness of similar places in Europe, combining the idea of solitude and repose which such scenes

inspire and the care bestowed by affectionate surviving relatives on the last resting place of those once dear to them, is in painful contrast to the neglected state of the graves here. There is not even a fence to restrain pigs and other animals from rooting and roving over the dwellings of the dead. If something be not done shortly, we may chance to witness the remains of those interred exposed to public view. Such an occurrence, it is true, is not likely to happen; but its bare possibility should be an inducement to the inhabitants to take instant steps to secure the ground from the intrusion of quadrupeds. Surely the authorities might have saved the town the reproach that now is attached to it, if they had employed the government men for the purpose to which we have alluded. We shall be gratified to learn that our suggestions have been attended to and that some kind of fence will shortly be placed round the spot.

This was followed up on the next Saturday, 27 June 1846, by a further article:

THE OLD BURIAL GROUND

In reference to a paragraph in our last number, we are glad to learn that the inhabitants are in no way to blame for the burnt fence, broken tombstones, and trodden mounds which shock the eye of the stranger at the place known as the Old Burial Ground. Those whose remains are interred within it were either Government officials or prisoners of the Crown. The burial place accessible to the inhabitants is further removed from the town and is kept with scrupulous care. Reproach therefore cannot rest with them. We have heard that the Government have once or twice protected the ground with a fence, which has shortly afterwards been pulled down by the blacks, brought by them into town and sold for firewood; and that those interested therefore consider further attempts to be hopeless.

We trust, however, that one more effort will be made to rescue Brisbane from the stigma which now seemingly attaches to it. The Old Burial Ground is the last earthly resting place of many an useful and respected public servant—the martyr Stapylton and numerous others—and should there be any amongst us who will venture to assert that their remains deserved

no better fate, we would ask, "Do you wish that when you die their fate shall be yours—that the mound over the simple grave to which you may be borne by your sorrowing friends, shall be trampled into a shapeless mass, its tombstone broken and displaced and the few flowering plants which affection has taught to twine round it, uprooted and withered? To such a question there can only be one reply.

The authorities are urged to erect another fence. This paper will hold up to public reprobation anyone heartless enough to tempt the blacks to destroy it.

I think the editor of the "Moreton Bay Courier"¹ was close enough in point of time, and the settlement had not then developed sufficiently to hide early locations in the way they are now hidden, for his statement to be authoritative as to the people (Government officials and prisoners of the Crown) who were buried in the Old Burial Ground. (It is interesting to note Surveyor Stapylton's body was brought in from Mt. Lindsay or thereabouts for burial in Brisbane in 1840.) The editor confirms also that there was only one such place, and I consider it must have been located where the surveyors say it was in their plans. In passing, I would say that whilst I regard Mr. Gerler's 1844 sketch plan as an interesting and useful document, it has its limitations in that he was not a draftsman and one cannot scale off any site on his map from any fixed datum point. He appears to have fitted what he could into the sheet of paper available with a certain amount of license as to site locations becoming inevitable. His sketch would be fairly fresh in people's minds in 1913 because it was given some publicity in the Golden Jubilee History published in 1909, and it may well have unconsciously influenced Mr. Ruthning and Mrs. Sonnenschein in their memories of the site of the Old Burial Ground. Mr. J. J. Knight may also have been influenced by Gerler's map, the presence of the children's graves near Herschell Street, and memories of the Skew Street Burial Ground when he stated in "Early Days" that the Old Burial Ground extended from Herschell Street for some way towards Quay Street.

1. Arthur Sidney Lyon, partner of James Swan, a printer, was first editor of *The Moreton Bay Courier*.—Ed.

Lastly, in the westernmost section of the Brisbane Panorama taken from the Windmill in 1859, you can, with a good magnifying glass, see at least one enclosure and about a dozen tombstones on the site of the Old Burial Ground where the surveyors show it. There are no tombstones on the nearer vacant land anywhere on the town side of North Quay.

Therefore I am prepared to say that, apart from the Children's Graves, Brisbane's only and earliest Old Burial Ground was sited in the Skew Street area.