



ERECTED  
BY THE  
DUNEDIN  
VOLUNTEER  
FIRE  
BRIGADE.  
1874.  
IN MEMORY  
OF

JAMES [unclear]  
DIED [unclear]  
[unclear]  
ROBERT [unclear]  
DIED 24<sup>th</sup> JANUARY  
AGED 39  
JAMES GALE [unclear]  
DIED 4<sup>th</sup> [unclear]  
AGED 38 YEARS  
PETER [unclear]  
DIED [unclear]  
THOMAS [unclear]  
DIED [unclear]

EDWIN [unclear]  
DIED [unclear]

## **DUNEDIN VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADE'S GRAVE**

Special thanks to Frances Barkman for drawing my attention to this grave and an article in the Otago Daily Times 19 July 1978.

This article quotes that firemen in Dunedin's early days were public-spirited men whose equipment was primitive, who often did not have access to water when the need for it was greatest, and whose problems were not always appreciated by the City Fathers and the public. They thus developed into a tight-knit little society, which always looked after its own.

One of the rules adopted when the first volunteer fire brigade was set up in 1862, was that all members were to appear in full uniform at the engine house should the funeral of any one of their fellow fireman take place. The bell was to toll for one hour and ten shillings was to be levied on any member who absented himself.

At Christmas, 1871, a party of eager youths set out in a small boat on the harbour. The trip ended in disaster with three members of the same Scrymgeour family drowned in the tragedy. When the body of Peter Scrymgeour was brought ashore, his fellow fire-fighters took charge of it. On the day of the funeral all brigade members walked in uniform. The fire bell was tolled for an hour before the funeral left the fire station and continued tolling till it had nearly reached the Southern Cemetery.

Former brigade captain, John Hughes, in March 1872 presented a plot in the Southern Cemetery to his fellow fire fighters. As if to confirm Hughes gloomy outlook on mortal existence, another fireman, James Galbraith, young, unmarried and apparently enjoying the best of health, died suddenly while painting the Oriental Hotel. A full turnout of the brigade in working uniform attended the funeral. The body was interred in the plot Hughes had given. The sexton Mr A. Muir treated the grave with great care and in June 1872 the brigade voted him ten shillings and sixpence for his help. It was planned to put four bluestone pillars above the grave and plant a cypress tree at each corner.

By 1874, three brigade members lay in the Southern cemetery although not all in the same plot. It was decided in March 1874 that the grave Hughes had presented was too small for the erection of "a stone of some pretension". The City Council was approached with a tentative request that a ten pound plot be given and the council agreed. Reports in the newspaper suggested that the three dead firemen were disinterred and reburied in the new plot but this may not have been the case. So who is buried or, as the case may be, not buried in this plot.

Block 101 Plot 3 contains a very badly weathered and almost indecipherable headstone. It is constructed a huge sandstone with a decoration on the top of hoses, helmets, ladders, axes etc. The following transcript of the headstone is with the help of the Southern Cemetery burial registers compiled by the NZSG Dunedin Branch under the guidance of Ngaire Ockwell.

**ERECTED BY THE DUNEDIN VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADE 1874**

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF**

**JAMES BURNS DIED 3 NOVEMBER 1864 AGED 24 YEARS**

**ALSO ROBERT \_\_\_\_\_ DIED 20 JAN \_\_\_\_ AGED 39 YEARS**

**ALSO JAMES GALBRAITH DIED 4 MARCH 1872 AGED 32 YEARS**

**ALSO PETER SCRYMGEOUR DIED 25 DECEMBER 1871**

**ALSO THOMAS WEEKES DIED 20 FEBRUARY 1884**

**ALSO EDWIN BUTLER DIED AGED 44 YEARS.**

Of the six names on the headstone only four actually appear to be buried in the plot - James Burns, James Galbraith, Thomas Weekes and Edwin Butler. Peter Scrymgeour is buried in Lot 2, Block 28 with the rest of his family including two brothers who drowned with him in the

harbour on Christmas day 1871. There is no record in the burial book as to who the Robert ? who died aged 39 years was.

According to the burial books there was also suppose to be a Charles Ackers buried in Block 101, lot 3 but his name does not appear on the headstone.

Of the four men actually buried in the grave we know the following:

**JAMES GALBRAITH** died on 4th March 1872 aged 32 years of a burst blood vessel. He was a painter here in Dunedin having been born in Scotland and had lived in Otago for seven years having come here from Victoria in Australia.

**JAMES BURNS** died on 3 November 1864 and was originally buried in Block A lot 38 before being reinterred in the Fire Brigades grave on the 6th May 1874. He was only 24 years of age and a green grocer when he died of Typhoid fever. He was born in Belfast, Ireland and had lived in Otago for two years having come here from Victoria, Australia.

**EDWIN BUTLER** died on 31 July 1888 aged 44 years. He was a carpenter residing at Great King Street. He was born in England but had lived in Otago for fourteen year.

**THOMAS WEEKES** died on 20 February 1884 aged 47 years. He was a labourer and resident of Dunedin.

**PETER SCRYMGEOUR** whose name appears on the gravestone but whom is not buried in the plot was drowned in the harbour on the 25 December 1871 aged 23 years. He was a painter born in Scotland but a resident of Dunedin. The headstone on his family's grave makes sad reading for any family historian.

## **BLOCK 28 PLOT 2**

**ERECTED BY JAMES SCRYMGEOUR**

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF**

**HIS FATHER JOHN DIED 5 MARCH 1864 AGED 45 YEARS**

**ALSO HIS BELOVED BROTHERS WILLIAM AND PETER AGED**

**24 YEARS AND JOHN AGED 22 YEARS**

**DROWNED DUNEDIN HARBOUR CHRISTMAS DAY 1871**

**ALSO DAVID SCRYMGEOUR**

**DIED 23 APRIL 1924 AGED 68 YEARS**

**SARAH AMELIA DIED 27 JUNE 1943 AGED 86 YEARS**

**“TOGETHER IN LIFE,**

**AND IN DEATH THEY ARE NOT DIVIDED”**

**ALSO AMELIA ELIZABETH WILSON DIED 12 OCTOBER 1969**