

# Symonds Street Cemetery Bishop Selwyn's Path Waiparuru Nature Trail

Trail guide for the lower Anglican and General sections, and the bush of Grafton Gully



View of Grafton Gully with Symonds Street Cemetery on the left, c1840s. John Mitford, [Alexander Turnbull Library](#), Ref: E-216-f-041.

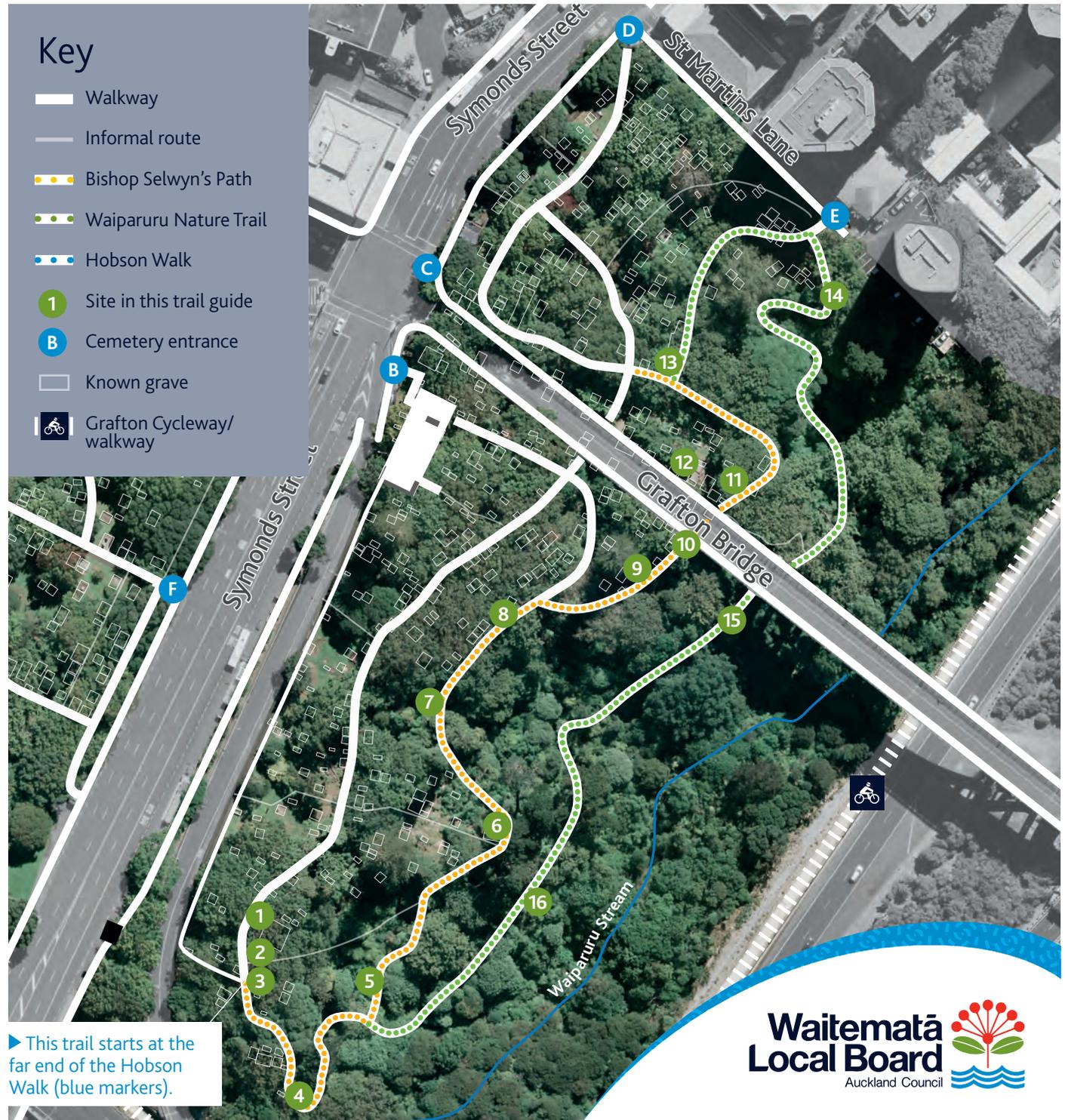
## A green heritage trail in the central city

This trail guide will help you explore the lower part of the Anglican and General/Wesleyan sections of the Symonds Street Cemetery (yellow markers), and the Waiparuru Stream in Grafton Gully (green markers).

To walk these trails will take about one hour. You can access these trails by extending Hobson's Walk (the blue markers, described in a separate Trail Guide), from either side of the Grafton Street Bridge or by starting from St Martins Lane.

The lower paths are steep in places. Make sure you wear appropriate footwear.

There is also a trail guide for the Jewish, Presbyterian and Catholic sections of the cemetery on the other side of Symonds Street – the Rose Trail. You can access more information on our mobile app (see back page).



▶ This trail starts at the far end of the Hobson Walk (blue markers).



View from above Grafton Gully showing graveyard and Government House, Auckland. 1843. [Alexander Turnbull Library, Ref: E-216-f-111.](#)

## Early Māori use

Karangahape (The Call of Hape) is named for the Tainui ancestor who stood on the ridge and called to his kinsmen on the beaches below as they arrived from Hawai'i. Hape, also known as Rakataura, is a significant figure in the histories of many Auckland tribes.

The Symonds Street Cemetery is located in an area of intense Māori occupation and use. Seasonal fishing villages at the base of Queen Street and Grafton Gully allowed Ngāti Whatua, Marahutu and Hauraki tribes to dominate the produce markets of early Auckland. These markets at Waipapa, now the base of Constitution Hill, were a vital trading link for early Pākehā settlers to the area.

Māori walked up from the coastal villages and along Rangipuke (the Symonds Street ridge) to reach Maungawhau Pā (Mt Eden fortified village), or followed the westwards track along the Karangahape ridge on the long journey to Cornwallis (also called Karangahape) near the mouth of the Manukau Harbour.

The dense vegetation in Grafton Gully provided birds to preserve and eat, and supplied building materials. The freshwater streams, including the Waiparuru (Murky Waters) which flows at the base of the Cemetery on the eastern side, provided a water source for drinking and washing.

Auckland Māori traditionally buried or interred their dead after their own customs, often in volcanic caves, rather than in formal European-style cemeteries such as the Symonds Street. Iwi throughout the region however now maintain urupā, similar to European cemeteries, on their tribal lands.

## Bishop Selwyn

The upper contour walk (yellow markers) is named for George Augustus Selwyn, the first Anglican Bishop of New Zealand, who applied for land and consecrated this cemetery in 1842.

As a young man, he was a strong swimmer and oarsman, representing Cambridge University in the inaugural Oxford–Cambridge boat race in 1829. The post of Bishop of New Zealand was first offered to his elder brother, who declined. A week later Selwyn himself accepted it.

Selwyn arrived in Auckland, New Zealand, on 30 May 1842 aboard the brig *Bristolian*. On arrival, Selwyn impressed local Māori, he had started to learn their language on the voyage. He immediately took a six month tour of New Zealand, covering 3,700km, one third walking, the rest by ship, horseback, boat and waka.

He became a competent sailor and in his small schooner, the *Undine*, he visited all of New Zealand, including the Chatham Islands, and Ruapuke and Stewart Islands. "To see the Bishop handle a boat was almost enough to make a man a Christian," a sailor once said. When he left Auckland in 1868, the streets were full of well-wishers, and a public holiday was declared.

He died at Lichfield in the UK on 11 April 1878. It is said that his last words were in Te Reo Māori, and that they meant 'It is all light'.

▶ To start this trail, make your way along the Hobson Walk, to the place where the unformed track meets the walkway.

### 1 Leaning trees

Looking back along the paths you can see most of the trees leaning down the slope. Trees have self seeded or been close planted and have grown at odd angles to avoid each others canopies. The first oaks to be grown in the cemetery were inter-planted with conifers to encourage them to grow straight and tall.



These conifers were later removed. Some of the trees have massive branches out into the canopy space.

Arborists regularly check the health of the trees and undertake pruning to prevent them become unbalanced and prone to falling over.

Many of the old oak trees are leaning. Some eventually fall over.



### 2 Aussie import

This impressive Illiwarra or Port Jackson Fig (*Ficus rubiginosa*) is probably 100 years old. It was certainly planted here, possibly to mark a grave of a person with Australian connections.

Now these figs are regarded as a pest tree in Auckland. They are pollinated by a species of wasp, which has recently become established New Zealand, and can reproduce here more easily – hence the concern about them spreading.

### 3 Katherine Blanch Daveney - typhoid victim

Katherine Blanch Daveney's distinctive church-shaped grave in the Anglican section lies at the corner of the Hobson's Walk, where the paths turns down into the glade.

Her descendant Dr Roslyn De Avene provided these family notes:

"My great-grandmother, her husband Captain Burton John Daveney (of the military) and two little sons were on a shipwreck off the New Zealand coast in 1868. My grandfather was born the in 1869.



"Katherine in fact, was an aristocrat by birth – Lady Katharine Blanch Springett – but her life followed no even course. After leaving family in England, she and her husband lost everything in the shipwreck...

"Katherine died of typhoid fever at the young age of 28 years on

Dr Roslyn De Avene at her great-grandmother's grave.



about 1 May 1874. “She was blessed to have a lovely grave, a Selwyn Church design grave, no doubt a very expensive grave in those days, and it has stood the test of time.

“Newspaper records show that the Naval Captain and his crew off the HMS *Blanch* attended her burial at the cemetery.”

Typhoid was one of the most common diseases of 19th century New Zealand. It is transmitted by water, milk or food contaminated by the faeces of an infected person. It is caused by the bacterium *Salmonella enterica typhi*, which produces symptoms of high fever, sweating, diarrhoea, headache and cough.

#### 4 Picturesque indeed

The lower sections of this park (which were never used as a cemetery), are more dominated by native plant species – some replanted here, others occurring naturally.

This part of the track reflects changing aspects of the cemetery, where the more ordered layout of the west side, has changed into an area managed as a ‘picturesque landscape,’ and lower down, as ‘naturalistic.’ Where formal gardens and parks are designed around straight lines (axes) with

symmetrical elements, the picturesque style tends towards ‘variety, movement, irregularity, intricacy and roughness.’ - Hussey, C, *The Picturesque*, 1967, Frank Cass Publishing Co. ‘Naturalistic’ here means a mixed forest.

Many of the indigenous trees here were also planted, by volunteers from as early as 1876. The oldest pōhutukawa and pūriri trees are estimated to be at least 120 years old .

An article in the *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1922 reported on “two beautiful pōhutukawa” being felled in the cemetery. The report went on to defend other notable (and exotic) trees: “These oaks mean a great deal to those whose people lie beneath them.”

▶ Take the left hand track from here, to skirt the base of the graveyard. The lower trail heads down into the bush-clad gully.

#### 5 Native bush in the city

This small urban forest has some botanical items of note. There are some of the biggest titoki and rewarewa to be found in Auckland city here. This secluded site is suited to titoki, which need well-drained soils and shelter from the wind. Rewarewa also prefer well-drained, friable soil – but will search for plenty of sunlight.

Kohekohe trees in the gully show extensive possum damage as the leaves are especially palatable to them. It is remarkable that these introduced wild pest animals are found in this urban setting. There are old specimens of porokaiwhiri (pigeonwood) here. They are recognisable by their coppicing habit, which produces straight stems of soft white wood.

Old pūriri trees are a feature of this native forest. Their name is made up of pū (tree trunk) and riri (a battle), referring to the holes bored into the trees by pepe (pūriri moths). These species all provide food for native birds, especially tui, and



Possum damage on kohekohe.



Kawakawa, *Macropiper excelsum*.

kererū, the New Zealand pigeon – meaning the Symonds Street Cemetery could become an inner-city wildlife sanctuary.

#### 6 Regeneration king

Kawakawa (*Macropiper excelsum*) appears to dominate the regenerating areas of the Grafton Gully bush. The holes in the leaves are made by an inchworm called the kawakawa looper – a species that appears to have immunity to the plant’s ability to poison other pests. The fruits are a great snack for kererū and geckos. Leaves of this plant make a peppery tea.

#### 7 Fungus farm



*Stereum hirsutem*.

*Trametes versicolor*.

*Cylomyces tabacinus*.

There are three types of fungus that grow on oaks at the cemetery. They are not edible. The multiple small bracket/polypore is *Stereum hirsutem*. The white-edged one, with soft greens/browns in the rings is *Trametes versicolor*. The dark brown ones are *Cylomyces tabacinus*.

#### 8 Rare resident



Tī ngahere, *Cordyline banksii*.

This tī ngahere (forest cabbage tree *Cordyline banksii*) is a rare plant in Auckland city, but seems happy in the Grafton Gully. This cabbage tree is a much more slender plant than the tī kouka *Cordyline australis* which is common in the Auckland region.

▶ Take the right fork in the paths at this point.

#### 9 Host oak



In an example of native-exotic plants co-operation, an imported oak tree plays host to the New Zealand dendrobium orchid and a karamu (*Coprosma robusta*). Just nearby, a vigorously-growing growing karaka (*Corynocarpus laevigatus*) seems to be supporting an ageing oak.

## 10 Grafton Bridge

When completed this soaring concrete structure was claimed to be the largest single span reinforced concrete bridge in the world.

During Arthur Myers' term as mayor (1905-9), Auckland had a population of 60,000 people. He predicted (correctly) that the population would double in 20 years time but few believed this.

Many thought that the city would never grow large enough to pay for such a large piece of engineering as the Grafton Bridge. Regarded as a waste of ratepayers' money, many people called it "Myers' Folly" for years.

Grafton Bridge was designed and built by an Australian firm, The Ferro-Concrete Company of Australasia Ltd. It took two and a half years to build, and was opened in April 1910.

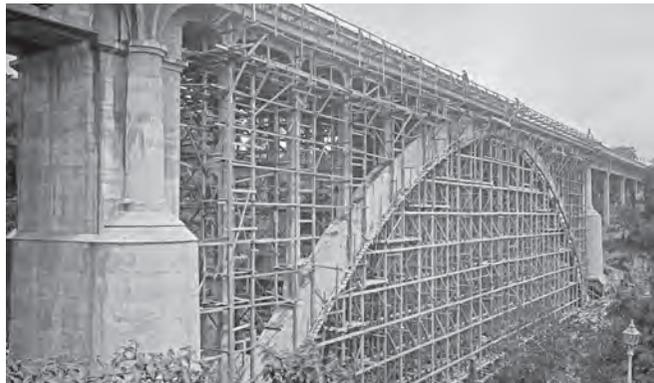
**Vital stats:** The bridge is 296m long. It is designed with a central span supported on parallel twin arches. The central span is 97.6m wide, rising 25.6m above the abutments and attains a height of 43.3m above the valley floor.

**Lots of wood:** The timber formwork for the main arch consisted of 400,000 super feet (943 cubic metres) of West Australian jarrah and Oregon pine. This massive amount of water- and rot-resistant timber was specially imported at no small expense.

**Concrete for the main arch:** The pouring of concrete for the main arch took 13 days. All the 1200 tons of concrete for this



Early stages of the building of Grafton Bridge looking across from Grafton Road, January 11, 1908. [Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, AWNS-19080116-5-1.](#)



The bridge was constructed using a huge timber support structure, c1910. [Alexander Turnbull Library, Ref: 1/1-009511-G.](#)



The bridge's strength was tested with 292 tons of road metal on 15 March 1910. [Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, AWNS-19100324-3-1.](#)



A crowd on Grafton Bridge, 26 May, 1910. [Alexander Turnbull Library, Ref: PA5-0009.](#)

project was mixed by hand and transported by wheelbarrows. Halfway through construction the Ferro-Concrete Company was declared bankrupt.

Soon after it opened, the bridge carried much traffic to the great Auckland Industrial and Mining Exhibition in the Domain, December 1913 to April 1914.

**Hi-tech reinforcing:** On 5 October 2009, the bridge was re-opened after being closed for reinforcing work.

The bridge had a \$7 million carbon fibre strengthening upgrade to bring it up to current earthquake standards. It can now accommodate up to 1200 buses daily. The bridge now has a load-carrying capacity of 40 tonnes, up from 13 tonnes.

The work entailed each vertical member of the structure having four holes drilled from top to bottom to receive carbon-fibre reinforcing. This precision work achieved drilling tolerances of 2mm per metre.

These giant columns supporting the main arch are hollow (but sealed), with staircases up inside them. Local folklore says some workers were accidentally entombed in this column.



### 11 Autumn colour

This zelkova tree (*Zelkova serrata* from the elm family) comes from eastern China, Korea, Japan and Taiwan. It's remarkable for a blaze of colour in autumn leaves.

Zelkova adds a splash of colour in autumn.

### 12 Spragg family

The Spraggs were a prominent Auckland family, led by patriarch Wesley Spragg (1848-1930). Their distinct black granite monuments can be found alongside Grafton Bridge.

Wesley was well-known as a butter manufacturer, and first president of the New Zealand Dairy Association. He was also an outspoken temperance campaigner, leading protests and marches against the sale of alcohol. So although he was a prominent benefactor, he was often lampooned in newspaper cartoons for his stance on drinking.

This family plot contains memorials to Henrietta, Wesley, Mary, and Charles Spragg, and Annie Dearnley Spragg.

The family donated land at Kaitarakihi Park near Cornwallis on the Manukau Harbour as a memorial to Wesley Neal Spragg and "All the Boys", who died in the First World War. Wesley Neal Spragg was killed in a flying accident in January 1918,



Spragg family monument.

and is buried in the Old Cairo Cemetery in Egypt.

### 13 Rights campaigner

Heading out on the green trail you will see the grave of Annie Schnackenberg, who was a well-known suffragist, campaigning for women to get the vote.

She was also a Wesleyan Missionary, and founder member of the New Zealand Women's Christian Temperance Union (working against the effects of alcohol) in 1885. She became National President from 1891 to 1901, and president of the Auckland branch of the WCTU 1889-1897.

Under her guidance the Auckland WCTU was pivotal in organising the petition which contributed so much to the success of the suffragist movement and the passing of the Suffrage bill in 1893, giving New Zealand women the vote, the first universal franchise in the world.

Annie Schnackenberg is buried in the general section in an enclosure with other Wesleyan Missionaries and notables.

### 14 Early Grafton Gully bridges

There were two walking wooden bridges crossing this gully, before the current concrete one was built. They each carried stories – as well as thousands of people...



Annie Schnackenberg (seated, fourth from right) at the National Council of Women, Christchurch, 1896. [Alexander Turnbull Library, Ref: 1/2-041798-F.](#)



The first bridge, designed by William Anderson went from the end of St Martin's Lane (in the west) to Bridge Street (east). It was designed in the form of a wooden trestle bridge, and built in 1884 by Messrs Larkin & O'Brien.

It could accommodate three people side-by-side, and formed an important link between Karangahape Road and the Auckland Hospital and Domain in Grafton.

The trestle bridge saw most use on weekend afternoons when sporting events were held in the Domain. People became worried about the structure swaying and jumping. As early as 1890 guards were posted at each end of the bridge to enforce rules limiting numbers on the bridge.

In 1904 the City Engineer's department reported on the condition of the 20 year old structure. The bridge was working itself apart, with metal bolts rusting and several wooden members going rotten.

A smaller, temporary replacement bridge was built right at the bottom of the gully spanning the Waiparuru Stream. For a while the first and second bridges stood side by side.



Postcard showing the first, second and third Grafton Gully bridges.



The temporary bridge across Grafton Gully. Muir and Moody, 1905. [Alexander Turnbull Library, Ref: PICT-000097.](#)



People still used the first bridge despite it being closed for safety. It took two years to remove it.

Pedestrian access to the second bridge required quite a descent down the side of the gully via a rough path and then up the other side.

The second bridge remained in use for six years. During this period the small wooden bridge and the approaches to it were altered, wooden steps were constructed from Bridge Street and St Martins Lane.

Read the stories about them – and their controversies – in the mobile app. Scan the QR code to download it.

## 15 Orchards robbed

The back yards of suburban houses in Grafton adjoined the south east boundary of the cemetery from the early 1900s.

The native bush had become sparse, creating a way through.

*“Orchards robbed. Barefaced intruders. Clean Sweep of crops. Grafton Gully Properties.”*

This dramatic headline appeared in a *New Zealand Herald* article 19 December 1932, above a story about how “Owners of properties bordering Grafton Gully have been experiencing great difficulty in protecting their fruit trees.”

This was after the cemetery had been closed and the area declared a public reserve. The article continued: “During the Winter, relief workers constructed an extensive system of paths in the gully and cleared portions of undergrowth bordering on the private property. If anything the work has assisted intruders in their plan of stealing plants and fruit...”

“It is the belief of householders that the Grafton side of the gully is visited as much by those bent on stealing anything which takes their attention, as by people who are interested only in the beauty of the native bush.”

## 16 Re-vegetation efforts

Replanting of native species began in the lower gully before the turn of the century. A notice in the *New Zealand Herald*, 13 June 1876, read: “The Trustees will be glad to receive contributions of Trees and Shrubs suitable for Ornamental Planting of the Cemetery. Persons disposed to aid ... will oblige by kindly intimating their wish.”

Re-planting had another boost in the late 1960s, soon after the motorways were put through. Great banks of bare earth needed to be covered, in a hurry. In both cases volunteer



Early drawing of Auckland, c 1886, with the Grafton Gully in the bottom left. The backyards of houses along Grafton Road bordered the cemetery at the time. [Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, NZ Map 374.](#)



This aerial photo of Grafton during the construction of the motorway in 1964 shows the scale of devastation in the gully. Whites Aviation Ltd. [Alexander Turnbull Library, Ref: WA-72076-G.](#)

groups did the work. Mana whenua intend to restore the ecological integrity of the bush with further eco-sourced plantings.

▶ [Head up to \(4\) to complete your loop via the Hobson Walk \(blue markers\).](#)

## More stories

Our free mobile app (on the STQRY platform) has many more fascinating stories about graves of interesting people, and social, historic and ecological themes. Scan this QR code to download.



## More trails

There are two more trail guides for Symonds Street Cemetery, you can download these guides at [aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](http://aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)

## Grave database

Detailed information about the location and names of the people interred in this cemetery can be found in the Digital Library on the [Auckland Libraries website.](#)