HO77 – Werribee Cemetery, Corner of Railway Avenue and Cemetery Road, Werribee

Heritage Place: Werribee Cemetery	**HO Reference:** HO77 **Date updated:** 15 October 2026

Address: Corner of Railway Avenue and Cemetery Road, Werribee

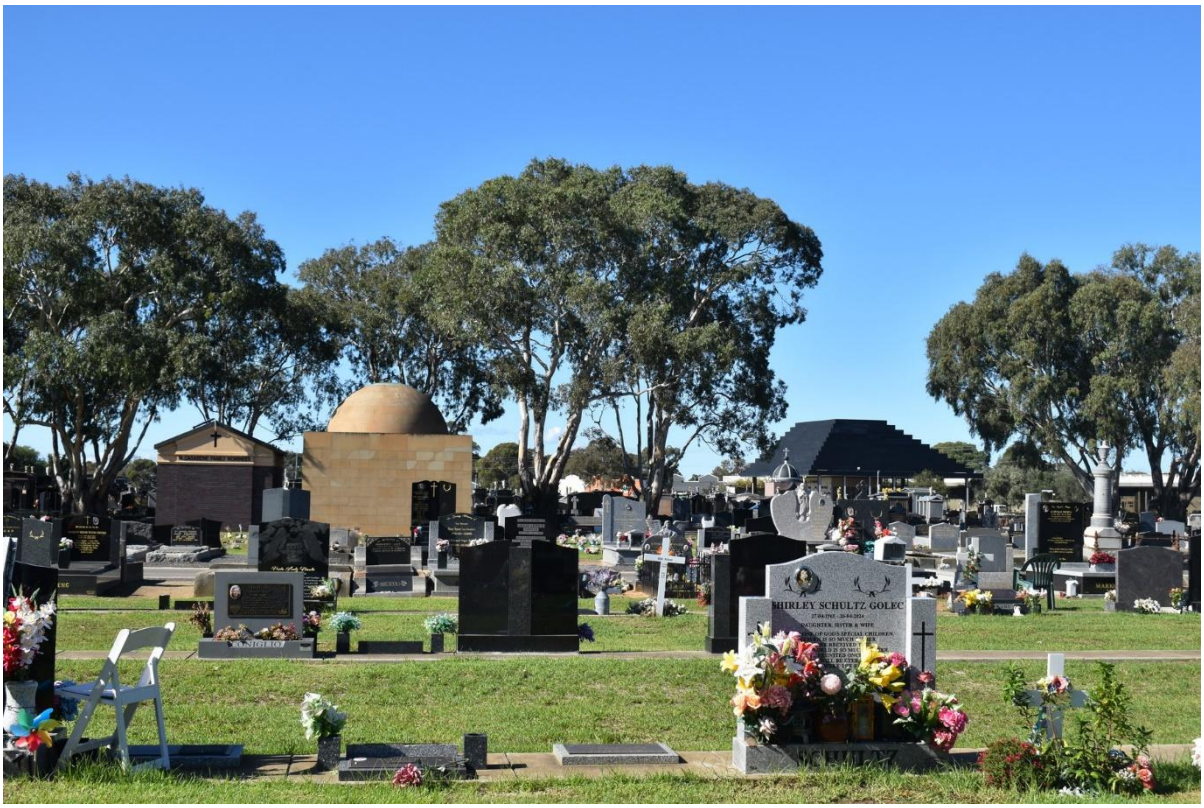


Figure 1. Werribee Cemetery. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.

Item Group: Cemeteries and Burial Sites **Item Type:** Cemetery/Graveyard/Burial Ground	**Key Theme:** Building Community Life **Key Sub-theme:** Preserving traditions and commemorating
Designer: N/A **Builder:** N/A	**Construction:** 1864 **Style:** N/A
Significance Level: Local	
Recommendation: Retain solar energy controls. Apply tree controls. Update place address.	

Controls:	○	External paint controls	○	Internal alteration controls	●	Tree controls (river red gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), sugar gums (*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*), bunya bunya tree (*Araucaria bidwillii*) and the leyland cypress tree (*Cupressus x leylandii*))
	○	Included on Victorian Heritage Register	○	Incorporated Plans	○	Outbuildings and fence not exempt
	○	Prohibited uses may be permitted	○	Aboriginal Heritage Place	●	Solar energy system controls

Curtilage

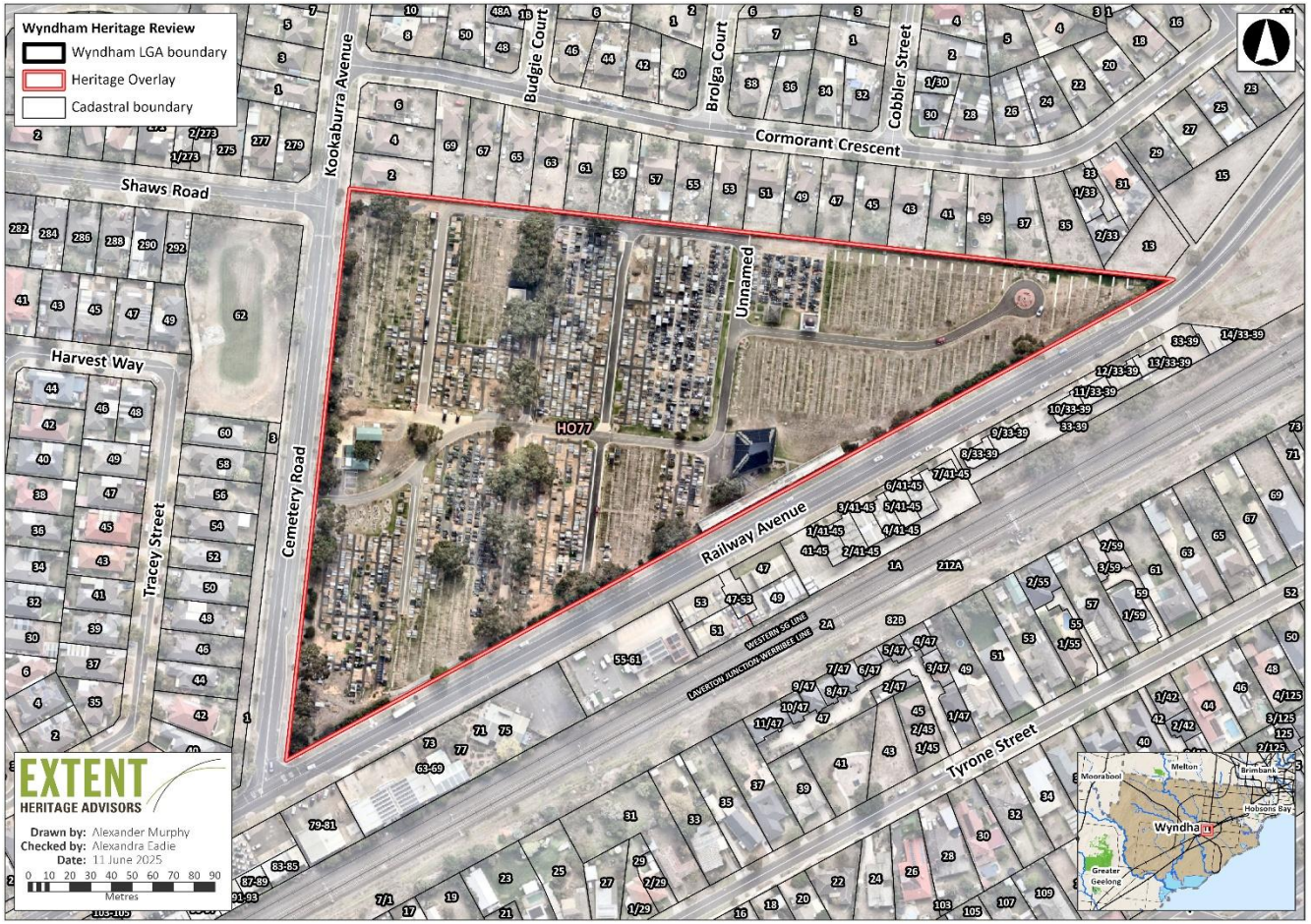


Figure 2. Werribee Cemetery, Corner of Railway Avenue and Cemetery Road, Werribee. *Basemap source*: Nearmap. 2025. Spatial data source: VicMap & Department of Transport and Planning

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	*Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history*	Werribee Cemetery is of historical significance as a landmark in the early rural township of Werribee which was managed by Trustees comprising prominent early residents of Werribee. Its establishment reflects the growth of community infrastructure in the nineteenth century and contributes to an understanding of the course of Wyndham's local history through patterns of settlement and land use. The cemetery is also of significance for its collection of graves of immigrants who began to reside in Werribee following World War I to take up market gardening in the 1920s, a key part of the industrial growth of the township. The native trees within the cemetery are indicative of early planting patterns within the cemetery and are significant as surviving elements of the beautification process that took place in the early twentieth century.
B	*Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history*	The place does not meet this criterion.
C	*Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history*	The place does not meet this criterion.
D	*Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments*	Werribee Cemetery is of local significance as a representative example of an early cemetery in a suburban context. Werribee Cemetery is also demonstrative of a cemetery that has remained in use for over 150 year with multiple generations of families interred.
E	*Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics*	The place does not meet this criterion.
F	*Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period*	The place does not meet this criterion.
G	*Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This*	The place does not meet this criterion.

	includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of the continuing and developing cultural traditions	
H	*Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.*	Werribee Cemetery is of significance for its associations with a number of families prominent in the establishment of Werribee and the broader municipality, such as the Hogan, Missen, Beamish, Cobbledick, Agar, Hegarty, Little and Armstrong families. The cemetery is also of significance for its associations with later waves of immigrants with a large collection of graves from Italian communities.

Statement of Significance - Werribee Cemetery, Corner of Railway Avenue and Cemetery Road, Werribee.

Address: Corner of Railway Avenue and Cemetery Road, Werribee	**PS ref no:** HO77

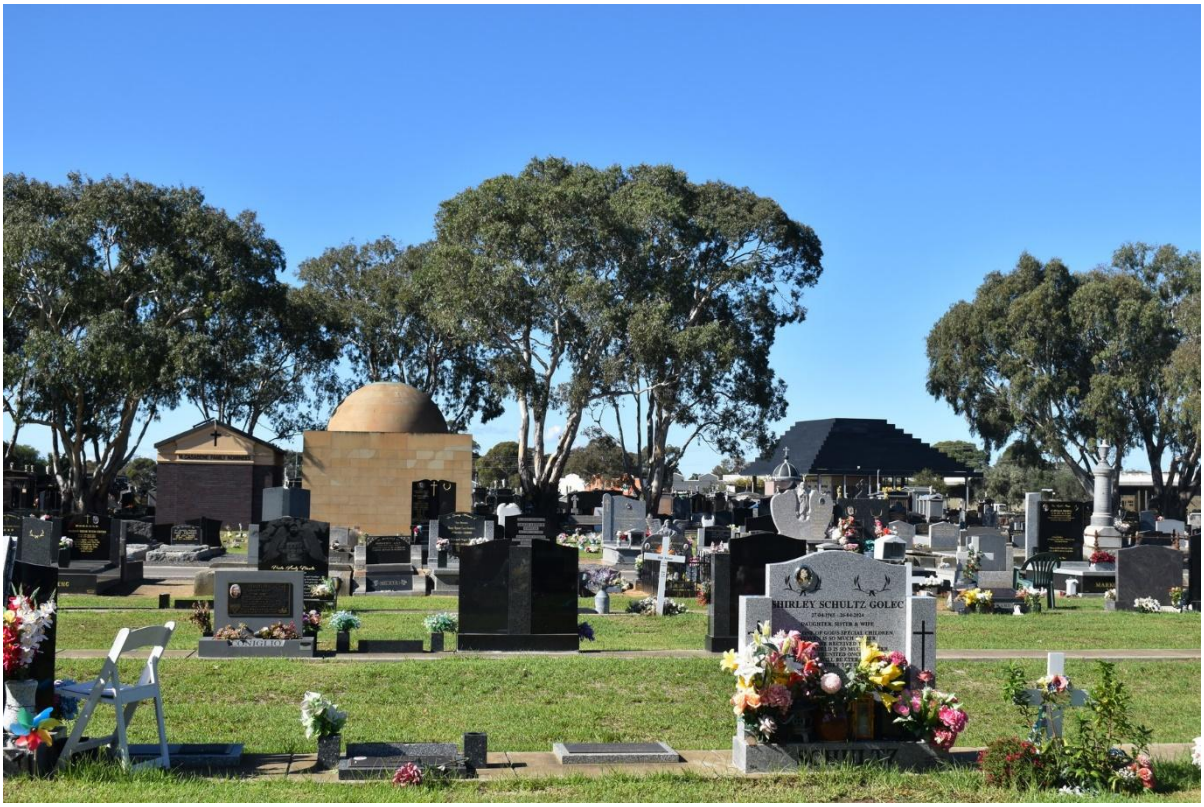


Figure 3. Werribee Cemetery. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.

What is significant?

The whole of the Werribee Cemetery, including the avenue of river red gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) and sugar gums (*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*), the bunya bunya tree (*Araucaria bidwillii*) and the leyland cypress tree (*Cupressus x leylandii*), historic burials and gridded denominational layout, is significant.

The twentieth century administration buildings at the west entrance to the cemetery are not significant.

How is it significant?

Werribee Cemetery is of historical and representative significance to the City of Wyndham. The cemetery is also of significance to the City of Wyndham for its associations with families prominent in the establishment of Werribee and the broader district and with later waves of immigrants to the district.

Why is it significant?

Werribee Cemetery is of historical significance as a landmark in the early rural township of Werribee which was managed by Trustees comprising prominent early residents of

Werribee. Its establishment reflects the growth of community infrastructure in the nineteenth century and contributes to an understanding of the course of Wyndham's local history through patterns of settlement and land use (Criterion A).

The cemetery is also of significance for its collection of graves of immigrants who began to reside in Werribee following World War I to take up market gardening in the 1920s, a key part of the industrial growth of the township (Criterion A).

The native trees within the cemetery are indicative of early planting patterns within the cemetery and are of significance as surviving elements of the beautification process that took place in the early twentieth century (Criterion A).

Werribee Cemetery is of local significance as a representative example of an early cemetery in a suburban context. Werribee Cemetery is also demonstrative of a cemetery that has remained in use for over 150 year with multiple generations of families interred (Criterion D).

Werribee Cemetery is of significance for its associations with a number of families prominent in the establishment of Werribee and the broader municipality, such as the Hogan, Missen, Beamish, Cobbledick, Agar, Hegarty, Little and Armstrong families.

The cemetery is also of significance for its associations with later waves of immigrants with a large collection of graves from Italian communities. (Criterion H).

Primary Source

Werribee Cemetery citation, Extent Heritage, 2026.

Description

Bunurong Country

Werribee Cemetery is situated on the lands of the Bunurong peoples of the Kulin Nation, the Traditional Custodians of Country. Despite the effects of colonisation, including dispossession of land, the Traditional Custodians have maintained a continuing connection to land, waters and culture within the City of Wyndham.

Physical Analysis

The Werribee Cemetery is located north-east of the centre of Werribee. The Melbourne-Geelong railway runs just south of the Cemetery. The Cemetery is bound by Cemetery Road to the west, Railway Avenue to the south-east and housing on Cormorant Crescent to the north. Aside from industrial development along Railway Avenue, Werribee Cemetery is surrounded by residential housing.

Werribee Cemetery occupies Allotment 25 Section 16 in the Parish of Deutgam, totalling 13 acres. Approximately two thirds of the cemetery is occupied by marked grave burial sites. The eastern third of the cemetery comprises lawn burials and two contemporary mausoleum structures. The Cemetery includes several denominational areas, with a series of internal streets providing vehicular access to each area; comprising four streets running north-south and one main street running east-west. Burials are arranged in linear rows, running in a north-south alignment.

In the north-west corner are Presbyterian burials, a private Mausoleum, children's lawn burials and a native garden memorial site. Abutting this group of burials are the Roman Catholic denomination. In the south-west corner of the cemetery are the Church of England burials and Rose Garden Memorials. East of this section and south of the Roman Catholic area is the Methodist denomination. East of the Methodist section are the two Mausoleums and Olive Tree Memorials. The mausoleum lining Railway Avenue is a long linear stone structure with a cantilevered concrete roof. The second mausoleum comprises tall columns supporting a black pyramid structure as the roof, with the mausoleum building set back from the columns. North of the Mausoleum are children's lawn burials and the Greek Orthodox section. The remainder of the eastern portion is occupied by lawn burials and Rose Garden Memorials. Various private family mausoleums have been erected, primarily within the Roman Catholic section and Greek Orthodox sections. Nineteenth century graves are primarily concentrated along the Cemetery perimeter and along the central east-west internal street.

The central north-south aligned street is lined with an avenue of mature eucalypt trees of various species, including river red gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) and sugar gums . While some of these gums are older, many were planted in the mid twentieth century. A handful of other mature trees are scattered around the perimeter of the cemetery. More juvenile plantings have infilled between these mature trees.

At the main entrance to Werribee Cemetery from Cemetery Road, there is a small collection of late-twentieth century buildings, now used for storage of maintenance equipment and an office. The entrance driveway curves around these buildings. A large Bunya Bunya tree (*Araucaria bidwillii*) grows next to the office building. A single Leyland cypress tree (*Cupressus x leylandii*)

grows on the western boundary of the Cemetery. Aside from the olive trees (*Olea europaea*) and cypress tree, all trees within Werribee Cemetery are Australian native species.

Alterations and Additions

- The entrance to Werribee Cemetery was moved from the southern boundary to the western boundary sometime around the turn of the twentieth century. Likely associated with the original entrance to the cemetery, a central avenue of gum has been maintained, including river red gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) and sugar gums (*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*).
- Landscaping has changed and evolved over the decades.
- The cemetery is continually being expanded with new burials.
- Large monuments and mausoleums have been constructed since the mid-twentieth century.

Werribee Cemetery is in good condition and high integrity. The Cemetery continues to be used and expanded, which does not diminish its integrity.



Figure 4. Significant Tree mapping of Werribee Cemetery, Corner of Railway Avenue and Cemetery Road, Werribee. *Basemap source*: Nearmap. 2025. Spatial data source: VicMap & Department of Transport and Planning .

Further investigations should be undertaken by an arborist, or other suitably qualified expert, to confirm the age of the extant mature trees.

History

Werribee Cemetery is situated on the lands of the Bunurong peoples of the Kulin Nation, the Traditional Custodians of Country. Despite the effects of colonisation, including dispossession

of land, the Traditional Custodians have maintained a continuing connection to land, waters and culture within the City of Wyndham.

This place is located on Country that was once home to many magnificent, towering River red gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), which grew on landforms close to water, such as the banks of Wirribi Yaluk (the Bunurong name for Werribee River). For Bunurong peoples, these trees are important representations of Country as it was before colonisation, a time when bark could be collected and used to make canoes and carriers for fishing and transport. Today, there are far fewer River red gums across this Country than in the past, and those that have survived are particularly significant as rare survivors of the damage caused to Country following colonisation (BLCAC 2026, 14).

Upon the arrival of colonists into Port Phillip Bay from 1835, land north and west of the fledgling Melbourne settlement was quickly usurped. Reports from early explorers highlighted the basalt plains as open, grassy and lightly vegetated. These conditions were ideal for overlanding stock, thus the Wyndham region was soon dominated by squatter pastoralists (Vines 1993, 9; Broome 1984, 23).

Werribee was positioned in proximity to a ford over Werribee River, connecting the route between Melbourne and Geelong (Murray 1974, 11; Lovell Chen 2024, 51). As traffic grew along the Melbourne to Geelong route, the Werribee settlement expanded steadily. In 1849, Surveyor General Robert Hoddle reserved land for a township, gazetted as 'Wyndham' in 1850 (James and Pritchard 2008, 15; Hocking 2013, 177; Murray 1974, 14). Crown land was sold from 1850, with the country allotments rapidly absorbed by the region's prominent pastoralists (James and Pritchard 2008, 17).

Place History

Werribee Cemetery occupies Allotment 25 of Section 16 in the Parish of Deutgam. Prior to the formal gazettal of the cemetery as Wyndham Cemetery in 1864 (Victoria Government Gazette 1864, 2337), a rectangular portion of the later Cemetery was used as an informal cemetery (Figure 5 & Figure 6). No marked graves from the burials pre-dating 1864 remain.

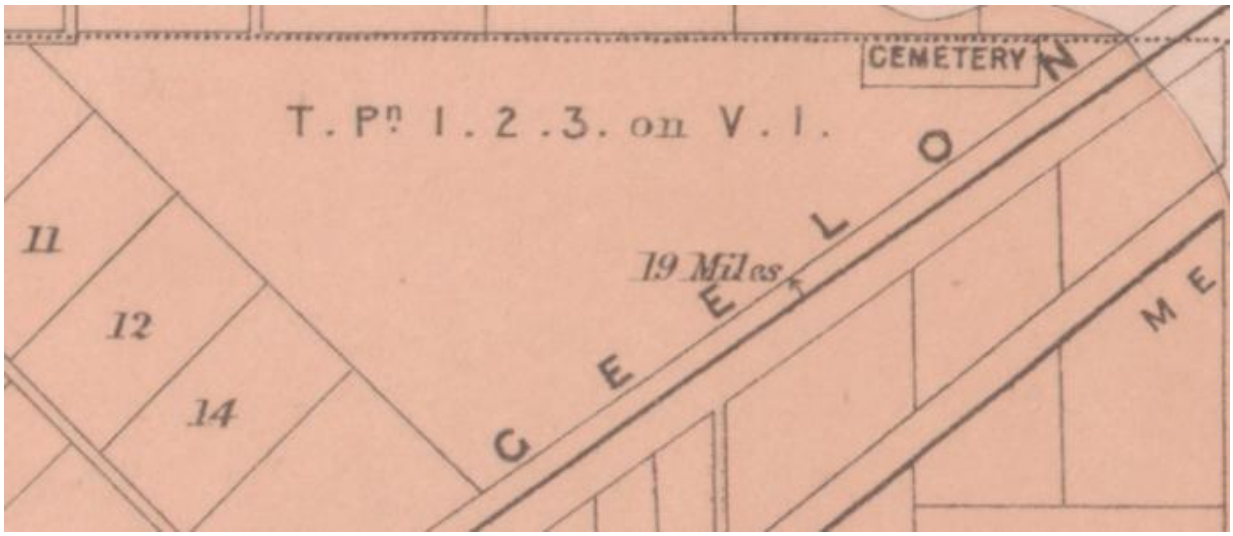


Figure 5. Extent of Werribee Cemetery in 1863, occupying less than half of Allotment 25. *Source:* Alfred Selwyn. 1863. 'Geological Survey: Parts of parishes of Tarneit, Truganina, Deutgam, Cocoroc, Mambourin and Werribee.' Geological Survey Office. Map, 32 x 47 cm. State Library Victoria. http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/94624

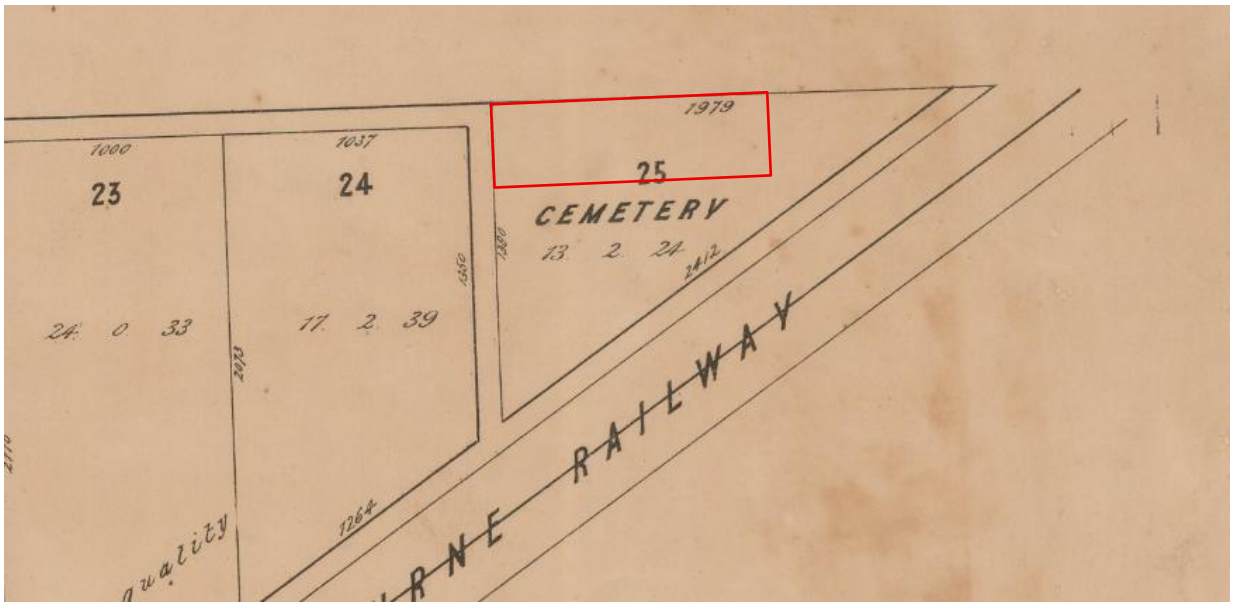


Figure 6. Allotment 25 of Section 16 reserved for the Cemetery. The red square marks the approximate footprint of the informal cemetery that was used prior to gazettal. *Source:* Department of Lands and Survey. 1864. 'Special lands, Parish of Deutgam, County of Bourke.' Map, 31 x 42 cm. State Library Victoria. http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/229775

Although much of the written record of Wyndham's early burials has been lost, remaining headstones indicate that many members of the prominent pastoral families of the Shire were interred in the Wyndham Cemetery (now Werribee Cemetery), including graves of members of the Hogan, Missen, Beamish, Cobbledick, Agar, Hegarty and Armstrong families, all notable in the development of the Shire of Wyndham.

The Wyndham Cemetery Trust was established at the time of gazettal. The Trust was made up of prominent pastoralists in the Wyndham region, much like Wyndham's other municipal authority bodies (The Argus 1865, 6). These Trustees were selected to represent the various religious denominations of the district (Context 1997, 212). The role of the Trustees was to administer the maintenance and repair of fences, planting and pruning of trees, marking paths and the laying out of graves (Williamstown Advertiser 1897, 3).

Based upon notes within the Wyndham Cemetery Trustees Minute Books, accessed by Context Pty Ltd in 1997, the main entrance to the Cemetery was originally located on Railway Avenue, likely aligned with the tree-lined vista of river red gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) and sugar gums (*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*) running centrally through cemetery (Figure 7) (Context 1997, 212). The early caretakers hut was constructed alongside this entrance. By the 1930s, this entrance had been changed to Cemetery Road (Werribee Shire Banner 1835, 2), however the date of this move is unknown.

Although the Wyndham township was not officially renamed to Werribee until the 1910s, Wyndham Cemetery was colloquially referred to as Werribee Cemetery from as early as the late nineteenth century (Geelong Advertiser 1909, 3).

Funding for the maintenance of Wyndham Cemetery was a persistent challenge over the course of the Cemetery's history. Due to limited funding available the Cemetery Trust relied heavily on donations and occasional local government grants; community disapproval over the maintenance of the cemetery was continually expressed. In 1875, Andrew Chirnside described the Cemetery as 'a disgrace to the district,' a notion with which Councillors agreed (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1875, 4), with complaints of cattle roaming the grounds, snake and rabbit infestations, damage to trees and damage to fences (Williamstown Advertiser 1896, 3; Werribee Shire Banner 1914, 2). From the 1910s, efforts appear to have been made to better maintain the cemetery (Werribee Shire Banner 1936, 2).

In 1935, it was announced that the Werribee Cemetery Trustees intended to erect a building for clergymen and a shelter for the general public (Werribee Shire Banner 1936, 2). This building appears to be the existing office building in Werribee Cemetery; however, the building has been substantially altered since its construction. Iron fencing and gates also erected at this time have since been removed (Werribee Shire Banner 1936, 2).

From the mid twentieth century, burials at Werribee Cemetery were occurring significantly more frequently, as a result of the dramatic rise in the population of Werribee from the 1920s onwards. Many of these new migrants were from Southern European communities living and working around Werribee, and they influenced the style and massing of grave sites within Werribee Cemetery. Large monuments and the mausoleum were constructed during this time, reflecting the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox rituals of the growing Southern European community. Since the late 1990s, through until the present, the large mausoleums towards the east end of the cemetery have been constructed.



Figure 7. 1951 aerial image depicting the Werribee Cemetery. *Source:* Landata. 1951.



Figure 8. 1984 aerial image depicting the Werribee Cemetery. *Source:* Unknown. 1984. 'Project Photography.' Digitised film photograph. Geoscience Australia. https://aerialphotography.ga.gov.au/Scanned/CADC/CADC2722/Thumbnail/CADC2722_frame502_thumbnail.jpg

Landscaping

As criticisms of the management of Wyndham Cemetery were raised from the 1870s, proposals to beautify the Cemetery with plantings of trees, shrubs and flower were put forth (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1871, 3). The Chirnside family were responsible for the donation of many trees to the Wyndham Cemetery Trust over the 1870s and 1880s (Context 1997, 212).

The landscaping of the Cemetery has been altered and changed throughout its long history. In the 1870s, the Cemetery was planted extensively with pine trees. In 1893, these trees were lost to drought and a grassfire, leading to renewed calls for supplementary landscaping (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1893, 3).

The north-south aligned central boulevard is presently lined with an avenue of river red gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) and sugar gums (*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*). It is understood that this avenue is a remnant of the original orientation of the Wyndham Cemetery entrance (Context 1997, 212). Evidenced in historic aerial imagery, a portion of this central avenue has been present since at least 1951 (Figure 7). By the 1980s, this avenue had been extended to the full width of the cemetery (Figure 8). Perimeter trees and vegetation has been present since at least 1951, with additional infilling having occurred since.

Caretaker's residence

In 1875, the Shire of Wyndham Council provided the sum of £25 to the Wyndham Cemetery Trustees, who used this money to construct a simple caretakers cottage, which despite being unfinished commenced occupation from 1877 (Williamstown Chronicle 1879, 3). The caretaker was responsible for gravedigging and maintenance of the cemetery. In 1893, the caretaker's cottage, no longer in use, was put up for sale by the Trustees, however no offer was made (Williamstown Advertiser 1893, 3). By 1896, the cottage had fallen into disrepair and was frequently occupied by squatters (Williamstown Advertiser 1896, 3).

In 1905, a resident sexton was proposed to be appointed as caretaker for the cemetery, who would be responsible for supervision of monuments, graves, and pathways, and it was proposed that a residence would be constructed for the sexton (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1905, 3; The Bacchus Marsh Express 1906, 2). By the 1950s, the Werribee Cemetery sexton no longer resided at the cemetery and rented a home nearby instead (Werribee Shire Banner 1950, 5).

The structures associated with the early caretakers have since been demolished. Werribee Cemetery is now one of the many cemeteries managed and cared for by the Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust.

Comparative Analysis

Werribee Cemetery is an example of an early rural cemetery that has been actively used since its establishment. The cemetery has many similarities in its arrangement and presentation to other cemeteries but more closely aligns with cemeteries in rural townships that were established in this early period including:

Truganina Cemetery (HO39)

Truganina Cemetery is comparable to Werribee Cemetery as an example of an early rural cemetery, also opening in 1865, with many prominent early residents interred. Similar to Werribee, Truganina Cemetery remains in use today and has a combination of historic and contemporary graves, some with large, adorned headstones. Werribee Cemetery is of historical and associative significance for its collection of early graves, as with Truganina, but also for its collection of graves associated with later waves of immigrants.

Broadford Cemetery (HO329, Mitchell Shire)

Werribee Cemetery is comparable to Broadford Cemetery as an example of an early rural cemetery established in the mid-nineteenth century containing early settlers and multiple generations of families. The cemetery is noted for its remnant mature plantings, similar to the existing conditions of Werribee Cemetery.

References

The Argus. 1865. 'The Gazette.' 11 February 1865. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5736292

The Bacchus Marsh Express. 1871. 'Wyndham and the Plains.' 28 October 1871. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article89699540

The Bacchus Marsh Express. 1893. 'Werribee.' 10 June 1893. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article88191641

The Bacchus Marsh Express. 1905. 'Werribee Items.' 25 February 1905. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article90164822

The Bacchus Marsh Express. 1906. 'Werribee.' 1 September 1906. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article90168173

Broome, R. 1984. *The Victorians: Arriving.* Melbourne: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon Associates.

Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, 2026, Wyndham City Council Heritage Citations: Cultural values project. PDF File.

Context Pty Ltd. 1997. 'Heritage of the City of Wyndham.' Report prepared by Context Pty Ltd for the City of Wyndham. PDF File. https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/Heritage%20of%20the%20City%20of%20Wyndham%201997.pdf

Geelong Advertiser. 1909. 'Wyndham to be renamed Werribee.' 29 November 1909. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article150670061

Hocking, G. 2013. *Wyndham – Our Story.* Victoria: Wyndham City Council.

James, K. and Pritchard, L. 2008. *Werribee: the First 100 Years.* Victoria: Werribee District Historical Society.

Lovell Chen. 2024. 'Wyndham Heritage Review: Thematic Environmental History.' Unpublished report prepared by Lovell Chen for the City of Wyndham. PDF File. https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-07/Stage%202%20Residential%20Places%20and%20Precincts%20-%20Adopted%20-%20%20Attachment%20F%20-%20Volume%202%20compressed%20-%202024-05-02.pdf

Murray, E. 1974. 'The Plains of Iramoo.' Geelong: Henwood & Dancey Pty. Ltd.

Victoria Government Gazette. 1864. 'Lands Reserved etc.' 18 October 1864. https://prod-gazette.slv.tools/view.cgi?year=1864&class=general&page_num=2319&state=V&classNum=G106&id=

Vines, G. 1993. *Pastoral Properties: Grazing on the Keilor-Werribee Plains.* Melbourne: Melbourne's Living Museum of the West Inc.

Werribee Shire Banner. 1914. 'The Werribee Cemetery.' 9 April 1914. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article74823722

Werribee Shire Banner. 1935. 'Construction of Road Fronting Cemetery.' 20 June 1935. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article74709404

Werribee Shire Banner. 1936. 'Improving Werribee Cemetery.' http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article74710803

Werribee Shire Banner. 1950. 'Wanted to rent.' 17 August 1950. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article74720552

Williamstown Advertiser. 1893. 'Werribee Notes.' 8 April 1893. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article270893138

Williamstown Advertiser. 1896. 'Our Neglected Cemetery.' 25 July 1896. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article270826304

Williamstown Advertiser. 1897. 'Werribee Notes.' 15 May 1897. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article270825728

Williamstown Chronicle. 1879. 'Wyndham Shire Council.' 20 August 1879. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article68591798

Images



Figure 9. View of the Church of England denomination, with the avenue of trees in the background. Facing east. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 10. View of the avenue of trees, from southern boundary looking north. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 11. View of the avenue of trees and a private mausoleum located in the Roman Catholic denomination section. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 12. View of Rose Garden Memorials at western extent of cemetery. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 13. View of linear mausoleum, completed 2019, lining boundary with Railway Avenue. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 14. View of the Mausoleum located next to the Olive Tree Memorials. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 15. Nineteenth century burials, located in the southeastern corner of the cemetery. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.

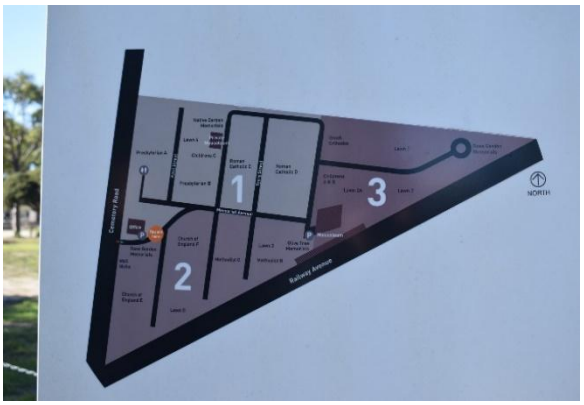


Figure 16. Map of Werribee Cemetery, located on signage board in entrance. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 17. Administrative buildings, Bunya Bunya tree and Cypress tree at main entrance at east end of cemetery. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.