

WILLIAM LEAKE (1829-1879)

One of Truganina Cemetery's first trustees

William Leake was a very astute businessman who came to Australia with his brother, Jonathon Brummit Leake, from Lincolnshire, England aboard the Holyrood which landed in October 1852. Another brother, Alfred, also migrated around the same time. William married Rebecca Jenkinson in 1861, by which time he was a resident of Skeleton Creek in Truganina. Unlike his neighbours who were all running sheep and cattle, he began to grow crops.

He and Rebecca had five sons and two daughters, one of whom sadly died as a baby. Rebecca died in 1873 of diphtheria aged only 28 years old, just a year after her last child Frederick was born, leaving William with six children under ten years of age. He married Rosetta Ann Pope Dickinson in 1876 and they had three years together before his untimely death aged 50.

William managed to successfully grow wheat, oats and hay to supply the horse and cattle feed market. The high quality of his crops meant he could demand a high price, as well as go into the export business. Up to 24 tonnes of hay per week was sent to India, for example. William entertained buyers at his large property by breeding rabbits for them to shoot. He also ran a large dairy with around 130 cows.

William also found time to devote to his growing community. He was one of the Truganina Cemetery's first trustees and helped establish the Roads Board to ensure better transport options. He was also a local councillor for many years. When he retired from the Shire Council in 1873, the year his wife died, he was given a testimonial

dinner at which various speakers praised his straight talking and "manliness and ability". Others praised his hard work for the community and his manner of direct speech.

He died aged 50 in 1879. He left an estate valued at 5,600 pounds to his wife and eldest son to manage. He was buried at the Truganina Cemetery he had helped to establish and a large crowd attended his graveside service.



Find out more

Frazier, E.J. & Watson M.B. *Victorian Post Office Curiosities: a treasure from the archives*, (2015)

James, K.N. (ed) *Werribee: the first one hundred years*, (2008)

Hocking, G. *Wyndham Our Story*, (2013)



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Jan is a professional historian who has worked across the fields of heritage, education and tourism. She has taught at several universities, including Monash University where she delivered the master of public history course. She is also a former Chair of the Heritage Council of Victoria. Jan was appointed to The Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust in 2010.



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