CONTEXTUAL REPORT

PIONEERS' MEMORIAL PARK

LIVERPOOL

A Report Prepared for Edaw

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SECTION 1.0
INTRODUCTION

Unlike Bigge Park the Pioneer Memorial Park has had two distinct "careers" as a cemetery and then as a park. The park is better documented by primary and secondary sources; the cemetery, as far as travellers and others consigning their impressions to paper, took a decidedly secondary role or place to St Luke’s Church. Like Bigge Park, there is a dearth of pictorial evidence. The following historical discussion examines the two separate purposes to which this portion of land has been utilised in the town of Liverpool.

While this discussion is specific to the development of the park it is also necessary to identify the state themes utilised by the State Heritage Inventory Project (SHIP). This permits the identification and comparison of similar sites across the state. To this end the relevant SHIP themes for Pioneer Park are:

- Land Tenure
- Environment
- Ethnic Influences
- Leisure
- Religion
- Death
- Events
- Persons
SECTION 2.0
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

2.1 St Luke's Cemetery

St Luke's Cemetery was not the first burial ground in Liverpool. One had been provided by Governor Macquarie by 1822. It was located on the north-western corner of Elizabeth and Castlereagh Streets (now the site of Apex Park) and was described by Macquarie as being of four acres and surrounded by a "strong paling" (1). It is unclear now why a second cemetery was established by at least 1821 (the time of the first known burial). This new ground, on the north side of Campbell Street between Northumberland and Macquarie Streets, was to become known as St Luke's. The Anglican portion was not officially dedicated until 1843. Additional dedications for other denominations were made throughout the nineteenth century until 1894.

Throughout this period, also, other cemeteries came into being to serve the town. A cemetery at the end of Scott Street was dedicated in 1889 and another on Flowerdale Road in 1892. St Luke's, however, remained a large and important ground within the town and became the resting place of many prominent local citizens. The latter included Thomas Moore (principal landholder and benefactor of Moore College); Richard Sadleir (Master of the near-by Male Orphan School and first mayor of Liverpool); the Reverend Robert Cartwright (first incumbent of St Lukes and also a Master of the Male Orphan School) and Charles Throsby (early senior public official, explorer and major land owner).

As well as the prominent public persons buried here the cemetery was the resting place for many members of families throughout the Liverpool district and it held an important place in their lives and esteem for that reason. St Luke's cemetery was the burial place for forty servicemen from the First World War. After World War II the headstones were removed, owing to the difficulty of maintaining the large number of war graves throughout the state. Memorial plaques were installed at Rookwod in these men's honour. The cemetery also was the location for the graves of seventy-two German internees of World War I, nearly half of whom had died in a near-by camp from the influenza epidemic of 1919. In 1961 the remains of these internees were exhumed and required in the German War Cemetery at Tatura in Victoria. Approximately twelve thousand burials are said to have been made while the cemetery remained in use.

There are few insights into the appearance of the cemetery in the nineteenth century. It is clear, though, that by the later decades of that period it had begun to deteriorate. In 1882 it was reported that,
"Liverpool cemetery will repay a visit. Its ancient tombstones are pages of antiquarian lore and a pamphlet on its historic 'contents' would prove most interesting reading. Tis a pity though its older graves should have been allowed to become so dilapidated"(2).

The cemetery was divided by paths into three sections. To the south the first two were set aside for Church of England burials and the third for Roman Catholic and other denominational interments as well as paupers. During the 1950s, when a survey of the park was initiated, it was found that the majority of the earliest graves (pre-1850) were located in the south-eastern corner of the cemetery. Only eight others of this vintage were found to be elsewhere in the ground (3). It was also noted that most of the northern portion of the cemetery had not been utilised for burials.
2.2 The Pioneer Memorial Park

Burials continued to be made at the cemetery until the 1950s. By that time, however, the park had become heavily overgrown. One letter of complaint to the Council at this time described the "tall undergrowth on the footpath and the fence,

"which has been taken down and most likely used as firewood letting horses and sometimes goats roam the graves and eat flowers as soon as they are arranged on the graves" (4).

In 1956 the Liverpool Apex Club was given permission to commence a tree planting programme on the verges of the cemetery (5) on the proviso that no memorials were touched and the pathways kept clean (6). The work convinced the Club that real gains would only be made with an overall programme of cleaning and improvement. In 1962 a proposal was made by them that they, in association with the Council, clean up the park and commence a beautification scheme. The proposal was agreed to and an approach was made to the Minister of Lands to change the trusteeship of the park, then in the hands of a group representing each denomination in the cemetery, to the Council.

During this time a survey was made of the park and representations made to the National Trust as to the best means of developing the site. In 1965 the Trust presented a plan which provided for all headstones prior to 1850 to be left intact and the remainder removed with the names and details recorded on brass plaques to be installed in a memorial building; it was a course of action initiated at several cemeteries (7). This essentially was what happened although at the request of several groups and individuals a variety of headstones of prominent people and families interred after 1850 were left in the cemetery. The proposal in fact met quite considerable protest from the local community and local historical society as well as several other historical societies and individuals (8).

During this time the legislative basis to permit the cemetery to be converted into a rest park and garden under Council trusteeship was still in process. Agreement was sought and gained from the various trustees. The Old Liverpool Cemetery Act was assented to in October 1970. The principal provisions of the Act were that a register of all burials should be made and copies kept by Council, the Minister and Mitchell Library; the land to be planted and landscaped; care to be taken not to disturb any burials but in the event of that occurrence the re-interment within the cemetery land of any remains so disturbed; a memorial to be erected; preservation of historic stones and disposal at Council discretion of the other headstones (9).

The conversion of the cemetery to a park proceeded as funds and staff became available. The first work entailed clearing away long grass, box-thorn trees and wooden fences. A curved slate "memorial wall" was created in the north-eastern corner and into this were set many of the headstones removed from the graves. As well a plaque with the name of the new park was set into the same wall and was unveiled by the Minister for Lands in 1970 to mark the commencement of the project. The completed park was opened with great ceremony in 1974.

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Historic Context

Pioneers' Memorial Park, Liverpool

The design of the new park reflected the tripartite division of the cemetery. The centre of the park was marked by a memorial building (in Section B) described at the time as "an old colonial design". It contains plaques listing all persons known to have been buried in the cemetery. From this building concrete pathways led to the four corners of the park. Apart from the memorial wall Council also created landscaped lawns, flower beds and massed plantings of trees and shrubs. Approximately six hundred trees and seven hundred shrubs were planted in the park (10). In addition an underground watering system was installed throughout the park.

By 1972 it could be reported that the headstones were in the process of being removed and the cemetery rotary hoed to prepare it for grass seed. The memorial building was in the course of construction and the design for paths was in preparation (11). A small amenities building was constructed in 1974.

In the years after its opening several changes and additions were made to the park. In 1978 a rockery garden at the corner of Campbell Street and the Hume Highway was removed and the area turfed over. A rose garden in the south-west corner met the same fate. A central kidney shaped garden was to be largely turfed over leaving a 1.2 metre garden bed encompassing existing standard roses. The area between the twin entrance paths at the northern end was also to be turfed and a row of trees planted; three groups of melaleucas were to be planted along the end of the park (12).

In 1979 Council gave approval for the provision of a Rotary Club memorial, in the shape of an old tractor and plough, in the centre of the large round garden at the northern end of the park (13). In 1984 the Lioness Club of Liverpool caused a pergola to be erected in the park. Later a concrete mowing strip was made around the base (14). A sub-station was built in the park during 1985. Other proposals, including the erection of a memorial arch similar to that at Kiama, did not gain acceptance.

From the later 1980s vandalism emerged as an increasing problem generally directed at the monuments. In 1993 it was reported that during that year alone (to October) twenty-two monuments had been the subject of attacks. Rubbish also was an increasing problem. Council considered several ways of protecting the park principally by fencing. In 1993 a recommendation was made to produce a conservation plan and maintenance plan for the park (15). Individual groups offered assistance; the Fellowship of First Fleeters who had received permission to attach memorial plaques to tombstones of first fleeters, offered the services of a stonemason to reletter some headstones. A stonemason was commissioned in 1994 to commence a major programme of restoration. The problems of vandalism and litter are ongoing.
SECTION 3.0
SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTATION

3.1 Abbreviations Used in the Text

HRA Historical records of Australia

3.2 Endnotes to the Text

1. HRA Series I, X; 691
2. Fullers County of Cumberland Yearbook 1882.
3. Council File Note 1956
6. Catholic Church Warden to Town Clerk 4/7/1956
10. Liverpool City Council, Liverpool Pioneers’ Memorial Park.
13. File Note 20/12/1979
14. Lioness Club to Council 31/7/1986
15. Council Memo 20/10/93.

3.3 Bibliography

3.3.1 Books, Reports

Liverpool City Council
Liverpool Pioneers Memorial Park
ND.

3.3.2 Correspondence, Files

Historical Records of Australia
Series I Volume X.

Liverpool Council
Files
1956
1968 - 1971
1971 - 1973
1974 - 1979
1986 - 1989
1989 - 1993
1994 - 1995

3.3.3 Journal Articles

"Memorial Park Taking Shape"
Liverpool Leader 9 August 1972

"Governor Unveils Plaque - Pioneer Memorial Park Open"
Liverpool Fairfield Champion 24 April 1974

"Vandal’s Trail of Havoc in Historic Park"
Liverpool and Fairfield Champion 20 January 1993

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