



At the rear of the Clyde cemetery stands a beautifully-executed headstone, one of the earliest found in the graveyard, surrounded by an intact wrought iron fence, to two miners who were killed on 28 August 1866, while excavating a claim on the site of the present Alexandra Holiday Camp on the banks of the Manuherikia River.

Robert Boyd 38, and Ronald McDougall 31, were partners in the Manuherikia Ground Sluicing Claim. McDougall came from Mulreesh, Islay, County of Argyle, North Britain, (Scotland) and Boyd came from Ballasalla in the Isle of Man. Both men had been good mates who had been residing at a boarding-house owned by Mr David Jones.

A very detailed account of the disaster appeared in the Dunstan Times of the 31st August 1866. Leading up to this tragedy, several metres of useless alluvial overburden had to be removed to get to the thin "wash" beneath. The disposal of this overburden called for the construction of a tailrace which was to take the labour of four men seven months to complete.

They had opened a trench some 17 feet deep (5m) when an estimated 20 tons of rock fell on the two men, killing them instantly. A third man escaped with only a bruised leg.

Both men were comparatively well off Constable Neil searched the bodies after they had been removed from under the earth fall. He found upon McDougall a deposit receipt for 40 pounds, a 10 pound note and one shilling and one knife.

Constable Cosgrove dug into the earthen floor of McDougall's tent looking for further property, but none was found. No property was found on the body of Boyd, but a search of his tent revealed deposit receipts for 100 pounds, 50 pounds, and 30 pounds 7 shillings.

The deceased were both owners of shares in the Manuherikia Gold Sluicing Company and Water Race, being two of an unknown number of shareholders in the claim. The leading shareholder, a

Canadian named Jeremiah Drummey, would later construct the historic Alexandra bridge, the piers of which are now a local tourist attraction.

The inquest was held in the Royal Mail Hotel two days after the accident. Clearly the two were highly-regarded in the district because over 200 mourners followed their remains to the Clyde Cemetery and as the stone indicates, its cost was met by subscription.

Why Boyd and McDougall were not buried in the pioneer graveyard just across the river in Graveyard Gully is not explained as the cemetery was supposedly still operating at the time ("supposedly" because the communal stone says it closed in 1868). The best explanation for their burial at distant Clyde may be that the pioneer graveyard might already have reached its capacity. The "new cemetery" at Alexandra (the present one) was a going concern early in 1867 and it is likely that planning had been under way in August 1866 with Clyde being used as an interim solution.

When he died Boyd owned one-half of a sixth share in the MGSC's claim. He died intestate and his estate after meeting all claims and expenses amounted to one hundred and eighty three pounds three shillings and one penny.

McDougall owned a one-twelfth share in the same claim. He had never married and had no siblings. His net estate amounted to one hundred and thirty-nine pounds seventeen shillings which sum was remitted to his father in Scotland as next of kin.

The MGSC claim gradually fizzled through the 1870s-1880s. Towards its end its value lay in the race and water rights which eventually were sold to power a dredge and ultimately to the Manuherikia Irrigation Company. Its history is described by John McCraw in *Early Days OnThe Dunstan*.

The headstone records the following:

The above named persons were accidentally
Killed at Manuherikia by a fall of rock, and are
Deeply and justly regretted by all who knew them.

From worldly cares by a summons free
Here side by side they sleep, the sleep of death
Together toiled they, side by side they died
And Heaven we hope, received their parting breath

This tablet and enclosure is erected in token
Of respect to their memory by a few private friends.

Prepared by the Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand (www.cemeteries.org.nz) from information supplied by Ed Dwyer of Alexandra. Thanks also to Alexandra Lions Club members Brian Croot and Bob McKay who saw the historic importance of the site and the need for the headstone and gravesite to be conserved and carried out a professional job of straightening the stone and conserving the iron surround.