

There is no marker on Thomas Allen's gravesite in Dunedin's Southern Cemetery

A smashed and unreadable gravestone in Dunedin's northern cemetery looks like it is not worth a second glance. However the stone leads to two very interesting stories: this is the first, although the person is buried in Dunedin's Southern Cemetery. Next week we will hear about one of his children.

Thomas Allen was born on 10 May 1787 at Edmonton, Middlesex, England. He became well educated and wrote good English. From 1816 at the Royal Gardens of 'Bushey Park' under William, Duke of Clarence (or the FitzClarence family) rising to the position of Head Gardener (probably in charge of the general and kitchen garden operations). Bushey Park is now part of the larger Hampton Court Palace to the west of London.

On 17 October 1812 he married Sarah Weaver. The family settled into a cottage on the estate and together they had a large family.

On June 25 year 1825, as Thomas had secured a position as 'gardener' to the Australian Agricultural Company, the family set sail on the *York* one of two AAC vessels comprising the inaugural fleet bringing settlers to Australia. Allen had with him 112 selected plants he 'perceived suitable for cultivation at Port Stephens', New South Wales. This voyage ended in Rio de Janeiro when Allen and the captain fell out and he was put off the ship with his family. Allen and his family ended up back in London later in 1825.

He worked for the next 11 years in 'laying out and planting' London's St James's and Regent's Parks.

Thomas Allen, 49, his wife and 6 children arrived in Adelaide in 1837 on the *Tam O'Shanter*. One son Frederick William Allen, also a gardener, came out on the *Buffalo*. Also on the *Buffalo* were the main government entourage including John Hindmarsh, the new Governor, together with the Colonial Commissioner, the Governor's Private secretary, the Colonial Treasurer and 270 passengers. Allen's appointment to the Commissioners was as 'Gardener and Ground-workman to the Governor.

From 1836 to 1840 the family resided in suburbs of Adelaide where major nurseries were being established and operated.

Allen established plant nurseries at various locations on the banks of the Torrens River and supplemented his income by selling produce in Adelaide centre.

With the demise of his horticultural business in the late 1840s, Thomas and Sarah retired to a small cottage in inner Adelaide. Following Sarah's death in Melbourne in 1856, Thomas set sail on the *Omeo* for Dunedin in 1862. It appears he was journeying to join his daughter Amelia who had settled in Dunedin in 1861 (and whose story will feature next week).

Thomas Allen passed away in Dunedin on 27 April 1868 in the boarding house managed by his daughter, Amelia, called Bedford House. He was buried by undertaker Walter Geddes in Dunedin's Southern Cemetery on 29 April 1868. Sadly the grave has no stone in his memory.

Prepared by the Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand (www.cemeteries.org.nz) from information contained in: Jones, David and Ian Westergaard. 'Whither the First 'Botanical

Garden' for Adelaide: The Role and Contribution of Thomas Allen' in *Past Matters: Heritage, History and the Built Environment* (Palmerston North: Massey University, 2006).