

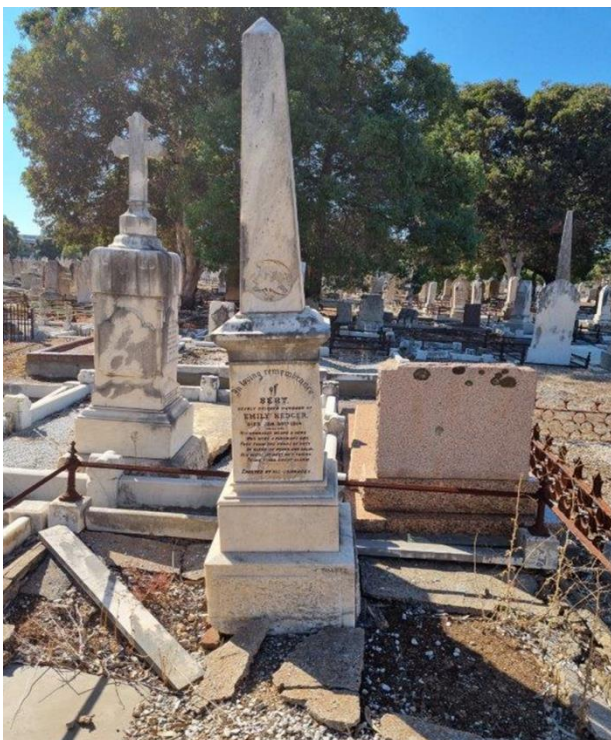
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

West Terrace Cemetery Grave Site

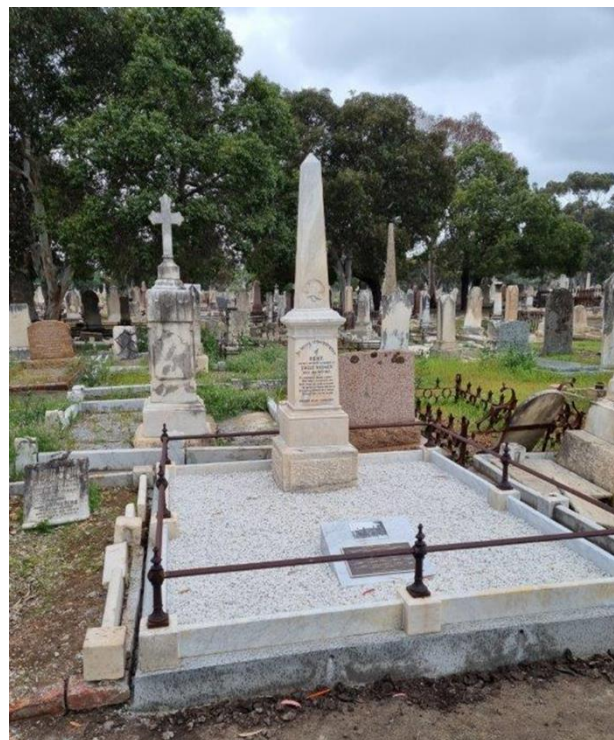
In 2020 the Fire Service Fund was advised that the grave site of Fireman Herbert Hedger who had lost his life in a line-of-duty-death on 30 January 1914 (25 days after his attendance at a furniture factory fire in Rundle Street, Kent Town) was in a state of disrepair and required major refurbishment works.

After an approach to be involved in this project, the Fund offered its support to coordinate the restoration of this grave site in consultation with the Adelaide Cemeteries Authority and other key stakeholders, with the intent of returning the memorial to its original state at time of construction.

Following the completion of restoration works in late October 2022, it was initially proposed to conduct a rededication memorial service aligned with the anniversary of Herbert Hedger's death, however this was unfortunately unachievable due to delays in identifying and contacting current family members. With the support of former MFS Firefighter and Historian, Dr David Sweet from the University of South Australia, successful contact was made with current family members of Herbert Hedger.



Pre-Restoration of Herbert Hedger's Grave Site, 04/07/2022



Post-Restoration of Herbert Hedger's Grave Site, 13/10/2022

Consequently in February 2023, a request was made to MFS Chief Officer, Mr Michael Morgan seeking approval to conduct a formal rededication memorial service on St Florian's Day, to mark the completion of the restoration works and recognise the service & untimely line-of-duty-death of Herbert Hedger.

Brief History

Herbert Brand Hedger was born in Jersey in the Chanel Islands in 1872 to Henry and Ann Hedger.

On 12 March 1902, Herbert, his wife Emily, and their two children Henry and Nellie departed England by sea for Adelaide.

On 16 July 1905, Herbert joined the South Australian Fire Brigade.

On 30 January 1914, at the age of 41, Herbert Hedger died, leaving behind a widow and three children.

Buttery and Sons Furniture Manufacturers Factory

In the early hours of Monday, 5 January 1914, Herbert Hedger, Foreman of the Norwood Brigade attended a fire at Buttery and Sons Furniture Manufacturers Factory at the corner of Young and Rundle Streets, Kent Town. On arrival, the two storey wood and iron structure was well alight with reports that flames were shooting up to 100 feet into the air.

Shortly after his arrival, the roof of the premises collapsed causing a huge flame to shoot across the road knocking Herbert off his feet. The heat from the blast was so intense it scorched the paint on the doors of houses opposite.



Despite the efforts of attending crews there was little hope of saving the building due to the high quantity of furniture and flammable materials, therefore the firemen focussed on preventing the fire from spreading to neighbouring houses. Within half an hour the fire was under control, however by this stage the factory had been completely destroyed.

Although Hedger was burned about the face, he continued to report to work for several days until his health deteriorated to a point that he was admitted to Adelaide Hospital on 21 January 1914.

On 30 January 1914, Herbert Hedger finally succumb to his injuries, and died some 25 days after attending the Buttery and Sons Furniture Manufacturers factory fire.

Despite Hedger's treating doctor citing that it was probable that the injury he was suffering to his head had caused his death, the coroner scoffed at the idea that he could have died as a consequence of his injuries sustained at the fire.

Source: State Library of SA, Fire Damage at Buttery Brothers, PRG 280/1/33/121

Although little was known at this time about shock or smoke inhalation, Hedger's widow was the first person to receive a compensation payout, and as such his death was recorded as a line-of-duty-death.

Herbert Hedger's Funeral

On Sunday, 1 February 1914, Herbert Hedger was afforded a Fireman's funeral that left his residence in Norwood and passed along Wakefield Street and Grote Street to the West Terrace Cemetery.



Herbert's coffin was mounted upon the same hose carriage and drawn by the same pair of horses that had carried him to the fatal fire.

From East Terrace, the funeral cortege was led by a large contingent of firemen on foot. As the procession passed the Wakefield Street station, the men on duty lined up in full dress uniform saluted the coffin, then stood with bowed heads until the cortege had passed.

Spectators also lined the route to the cemetery, and bowed heads which testified to the respect in which the dead fireman was held.

Source: Funeral of Fireman Herbert Hedger, The Observer Newspaper, 7 February 1914, page 31

MFS Wall of Remembrance

Herbert Hedger's name is included on the MFS Wall of Remembrance at Adelaide Station, which pays tribute to those firefighters who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. The MFS Wall of Remembrance was unveiled on 5 November 2012 as part of the MFS' 150th Year Anniversary.



St Florian's Day

St Florian's Day is named after the Patron Saint of Firefighters, and commemorated on 4 May. Florian was an officer of the Roman army and credited as a powerful protector from the dangers of fire and water. He joined the Roman Army and advanced in the ranks, rising to commander of the imperial army in the Roman province of Noricum. In addition to his military duties, he was also responsible for organizing and leading firefighting brigades. Florian organised and trained an elite group of soldiers whose sole duty was to fight fires.

International Firefighters' Day

International Firefighters' Day (IFFD) was developed in response to the tragic loss of five Victorian volunteer firefighters from the Geelong West brigade during a bushfire at Linton in Victoria, Australia in December 1998.

IFFD is observed on 4 May each year and is linked to the feast day of St Florian.

Within South Australia, Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) and Country Fire Service (CFS) firefighters are selfless in their pursuit of community safety through the protection of lives, homes, businesses, infrastructure and the economy.

IFFD allows us to recognise the role firefighters play in protecting and serving their communities, and honour those for their selfless dedication & bravery who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

