Early English and European burial grounds had little in common with parks until the nineteenth century. Especially with the advent of the Industrial Revolution, overcrowding in towns was rife and burial grounds were unable to cope physically with the number of interments.

One writer described the unbelievable conditions existing in England at the start of the nineteenth century thus:

In the churchyards coffins were placed tier above tier in the graves until they were within a few feet (or sometimes even a few inches) of the surface, and the level of the ground was often raised to that of the lower windows of the church. To make room for fresh interments the sextons had recourse to the surreptitious removal of bones and partially-decayed remains, and in some cases the contents of the graves were systematically transferred to pits adjacent to the site, the grave-diggers appropriating the coffin plates, handles, and nails to be sold as waste metal.

From this it will be seen that the earliest traditions of extramural burial grounds were often substituted in England for a burial ground surrounding the parish church or contiguous to the churchyard. In the period 1840 to 1855, this system of churchyard burial was severely criticised and with enactment in 1855 of the English Burial Act, finally abolished. So began the great period of cemetery development and the concept of the cemetery as a park.

In Paris the chief cemetery Pere la Chaise had predated the English legislation by five decades when laid out in 1804. This French development was the prototype of the garden cemeteries of Western Europe and later England.

Mount Auburn cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts was the first large landscaped cemetery in America. Starting life as a botanic garden, it was partially transformed in 1831 into a burial ground. The effect was picturesque with curved paths, substantial plantations of trees and
shrubberies and artificial water features. Later cemeteries such as Spring Grove in Cincinnati, Ohio refined the landscape approach and developed as the archetypal 'park cemetery'.

Kensal Green, laid out in 1832, was the first great nineteenth century cemetery of London. Following the precedent of Pere la Chaise and other European developments, a huge plantation of trees was incorporated. Influential in the promotion of such landscape ideals was J.C. Loudon's treatise On the laying out, planting, and managing of cemeteries; and on the improvement of churchyards, published in 1843. Supplementing the calls of sanitary reformers, Loudon pleaded for cemeteries that were properly designed, laid out, ornamented with tombs, planted with trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants, all named, and the whole properly kept, [which] might become a school of instruction in architecture, sculpture, landscape gardening or arboriculture, botany, and in those important parts of general gardening, neatness, order and high keeping.

For planting in cemeteries, Reverend W. Hastings Kelke suggested in 1851 that 'the trees which continue longest in foliage - such as limes, beeches, elms, sycamores - should be preferred'. Such suggestions were widely introduced in the planting of Australian cemeteries supplemented by many other species including cypresses, araucarias, palms, roses, lilies, yews and willows; all popular in local gardens of the nineteenth century. However, the Victorian penchant for floral bedding displays and shrubberies was deprecated by the Reverend Kelke. They are '...calculated only to awaken associations with domestic pleasure grounds, [and] they are inconsistent with the simplicity and sacred character that should ever pervade a Christian cemetery' he sternly warned.

Perhaps anticipating Loudon's picturesque ideals, the cemeteries of the Turks were an early inspiration for the modern cemetery with its ornamental plantations. One writer observed in 1880 that the Turkish cemetery was a 'favourite promenade' and recalled 'a cafe, modelled after the kiosk, [that] rises in a clearing which opens up a view to the sea. Noisy laughter echoes under the funereal trees...' Clearly this was a long way from the squalid burial grounds of earlier times.
As late as 1911, an American landscape architect, Harold A. Caparn was still advocating the idea of the cemetery as a park. He castigated the authorities who controlled cemeteries consisting of '...a thick crop of stone monuments, some of them hideous, many banal' and lamented that turf in its smuggest, smoothest and most unattractive shapes is everywhere ... and if a good tree has flourished, it has probably been cut down, lest it drip water on to some monument and mitigate its crude whiteness by a decent scarf of lichen.

An early advocate of planning controls in cemeteries, Caparn called for the design of monuments to be regulated by cemetery authorities. 'Lot holders should be generally encouraged to spend more money in brains and less in stone.'

Australian developments

It is evident from the foregoing that the English churchyard burial traditions were emulated by many early Australian cemeteries, although the idea of a landscaped park was commonly adopted in the planning of Australian cemeteries in the second half of the nineteenth century. Extensive planting was often incorporated and complex systems of pathways, especially in our large cemeteries, were reminiscent of larger parks and botanic gardens.

Mary Mackay evokes a vivid picture of Sydney's Rookwood cemetery put to use in the same manner as one would listen to a band in Hyde Park or stroll in the Botanic Gardens.

Not all travellers on the funeral train were mourners or visitors to a particular grave. In the last two decades of the century Rookwood had a reputation as one of the scenic spots of the outer Sydney metropolitan area. On weekends the trains were crowded, many passengers visiting the cemetery to admire and enjoy the beauties of the landscape and its atmosphere of tranquility.

Catering not only for the casual visitor, but sheltering mourners in inclement weather, many cemeteries had small shelters erected. Given the recreational use of cemeteries in the late nineteenth century, it was hardly surprising that most shelters took the octagonal hipped roof form, so popular in contemporary parks and gardens. Thus many shelters
had no specific or conscious design input reflecting their surroundings in the cemetery, beyond the normal thought given to a municipal rotunda or bandstand. However, those that did have conscious design input are worthy of consideration and given the comparative lack of change in Australian cemeteries (compared with municipal parks and gardens) the remaining shelters are often quite intact, and for this reason worthy of inclusion here.

CEMETERY SHELTER BUILDINGS
Architectural styles

The revival of the Gothic style, almost universally adopted by local church architects, was only occasionally reflected in cemetery shelter design. The Reverend Kelke made an impassioned plea in his 1851 text for use of 'Gothic or Pointed Style' and condemned the 'Classical or Italian Style' instancing pagan associations. Kelke reinforced his opinion by stating that 'England does not possess a single ancient parish church in this [Classical] style' and then apologetically dismissed St Paul's, London ('our only Paganised cathedral') as an acknowledged imitation of St Peter's at Rome.13

It appears as if this and similar pleas went largely unheeded. The municipal park ethos was a much more powerful force and very few shelters incorporated any Gothic elements. Extant Australian examples included the charming pair of timber buildings at St Arnaud (Victoria), the large collection of rotundas at Melbourne General Cemetery and shelters at Nagambie cemetery (Victoria) and Sydney's Gore Hill cemetery.

The Gore Hill example was erected in 1903 by the Church of England in the Gothic manner. The building, 3 x 4.5 metres and 5 metres high had a roof of zinc Wunderlich tiles surmounted by a cross at each gable-end. A contemporary observed that the building was 'an artistic robing room which may also be utilised for the conduct of a burial service'. Sadly the building was burnt down in recent years.14

Another small building with Gothic motifs was erected at Nagambie, probably early this century. The building has a rectangular plan with turned timber columns supporting a simple gable roof. The low walls are lined internally
Detail of cast iron panels on cemetery shelter, Melbourne General Cemetery

The local undertaker surveying the scene at St Arnaud cemetery
with ripple iron and externally with pressed metal of an uncommon Gothic pattern in the form of a trefoil window.

Of great significance is the pair of Gothic shelters at St Arnaud cemetery. Consisting of two conjoined rotundas; one quite diminutive possibly housing facilities for the officiating clergyman and the larger acting as a shelter; the buildings were erected by c.1870-80. Local reports claim the building was constructed by Mr Palmer, a Scot who specialised locally in the construction of spiral staircases.15 Certainly the buildings are well built; the intricate joinery giving credence to this claim.

The Melbourne examples incorporated Gothic motifs including pointed arches over openings and trefoil brackets supporting internal seating and the roof structure. This group will be discussed in more detail when considering prefabrication as a means of construction.

Norman church architecture was probably the inspiration for the shelter at Maryborough cemetery in Queensland. Thought to have been erected about 1883 this delightful building combined local timber constructional traditions with imported Norman motifs. The slender tower rising from the centre of the cruciform plan serves no apparent function.16

A cruciform plan was popular in cemetery shelters, possibly recalling the nave and transepts of church architecture. The Maryborough shelter was one such example and later examples at Rookwood and Ballarat also adopted this plan form.

The Romanesque style, subject of a conscious revival in Australia prior to the turn of the century was used for the Rookwood shelter. Plain surfaces were relieved by contrasting coloured brickwork and superimposed semi-circular arched containing Romanesque motifs. The building had a high pitched hipped slate roof striking for its lack of overhanging eaves.

In contrast, Ballarat architect George W. Clegg designed the waiting room at the Ballarat's New Cemetery in 190317 with ideas more firmly rooted in the popular local Edwardian traditions than the sophisticated Romanesque revival of his metropolitan contemporaries. The cruciform plan was contained by red brick tuck-pointed walls with a terracotta tile roof and
Cemetery shelter at Maryborough, Queensland
(photograph courtesy National Trust of Queensland)

Large brick shelter at Rookwood cemetery, Sydney
projecting timber bay windows producing a modest building, although the inclusion of a highly decorative flâche added a picturesque note.

Apart from these excursions into the Gothic and Romanesque styles, numerous cemeteries had shelters erected in the manner prevailing in municipal parks and gardens. Relatively small (often about 3-4m across), generally hexagonal or octagonal in plan with a hipped roof, they were typical rather than exceptional and only a few of the more unusual are discussed in detail.

The picturesque Malden cemetery shelter epitomised the more elaborate designs, with an octagonal plan of alternate openings and timber lattice panels. Intricate timber brackets and a frieze of lattice over the openings added to the complexity of the design as did stylized timber pilasters which framed the lattice panels and openings. 18

Intricacy was also a feature of the series of timber shelters at Rockwood. Again octagonal in plan, these were decorated with timber fascias bearing a pattern of alternating semicircles and chevrons. Carved and turned timber finials served a decorative as well as functional purpose as part of the roof structure. Sadly the group is now in a decrepit state; many now missing their corrugated iron roofs.

The cladding of diagonal timber lattice, found at both Maldon and Rookwood, recalled the summerhouses of private gardens and was characteristic of many cemetery shelters including those at Kangaroo Flat (near Bendigo), Brighton and Templestowe, all in Victoria. The Templestowe shelter was erected in 1900 with three sides of weatherboard and three of timber lattice with an asphalt floor. Costs for the job were £16 3s 9d for timber and £5 19s 6d for Mr Spears the builder. 19

Bendigo's White Hills and Carpenter Street cemeteries both had identical rotundas for shelter. This group was erected with diagonal boarded sides open above seating level with a screen of cast iron panels and graceful concave roofs edged by cast iron valancing. Encaustic tile floors were originally provided although these have now been severely vandalised.
The recently restored shelter at Maldon cemetery

One of a pair of shelters at Bendigo cemetery, badly in need of restoration
Roof detail and elevation of typical timber shelters at Rookwood cemetery
At Footscray (Victoria) a 'pavilion' was erected in 1889 to the design of architect John Little. Of similar style to the Bendigo examples, the iron screen was omitted and a verandah encircling the eight sides was added giving protection from the elements.  

Constructional Techniques and Materials

The most notable contribution to local architectural history by cemetery shelters was in the use of prefabrication. Both in Melbourne General Cemetery and the Ballarat cemeteries (and perhaps other examples outside Victoria), rotundas using prefabricated cast iron components were erected; the same pattern being used in Ballarat for six shelters and nine in Melbourne of two different designs.

Prefabricated structures in municipal parks and gardens were scarce in contrast to their demonstrated usage in cemeteries. It was this latter location where a relatively large number of similar buildings could be erected in the one location within a short period that prefabrication was economical. Cemeteries were large in comparison with parks. They were often developed or upgraded in distinct phases, contrasting with the piecemeal maintenance and development of our local parks. Manufacturers such as Walter MacFarlane and Co. of Glasgow did manufacture prefabricated rotundas and bandstands for parks, but rather than being erected in distinct groups they were thus linked not by geographical distribution but only their date of erection.

The Ballarat group was erected as a result of a competition. The Ballarat General Cemetery Trust invited entries to be submitted, and using suitable nom de plumes four designers responded. Under the prosaic heading 'Rotunda at New Cemetery' the Minute Book of 10 November 1891 duly observed that '...designs were submitted by "Boz", "Economy and Beauty", "Penny Postage" and "Zee-at"'. Local architects James and Piper, masquerading as the enigmatic 'Zee-at', were commissioned for the job, while J.C. 'Boz' Smith was awarded a premium of five pounds. The first rotunda was erected in November 1891 at the New Cemetery and a year later tenders were accepted for the erection of a rotunda at the Old Cemetery. The remaining rotundas
Brick waiting room (1903) and prefabricated cast iron shelter (1891-93) at the Ballaarat General Cemetery

Shelter at Rookwood cemetery
at the New Cemetery were apparently all erected by 1893. Roofs were clad in corrugated iron over metal rafters forming an ogee profile. They were supported on cast iron columns with the walls of solid iron plate and an ornate iron railing. Four circular panels, affixed near the openings bore the monogram 'BGC' in raised script letters.

The Melbourne group had cast iron columns with prefabricated metal brackets bolted to the columns supporting iron roof members. Although less decorative than the Ballarat examples, the shelters at Melbourne incorporated Gothic trefoil motifs in brackets supporting seating and the roof structure, while the use of brickwork, tessellated tiles, metal lattice and slate roofs gave the structures a picturesque appearance. All nine rotundas had been erected by 1896 when the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works compiled drainage plans of the locality and it is probable that they are contemporary with the Ballarat examples.

Apart from these rare examples constructed of cast iron, most cemetery shelters were constructed of timber. As previously discussed, lattice was a common cladding, often in combination with weatherboard, corrugated iron and cast iron filigree panels. Corrugated iron was the most common roofing material although slate was used in some rare instances. Some of the timber shelters were quite solid with glazed windows and an elongated enclosed plan, exemplified by buildings at Colac and Warrnambool.

Brick structures were far less common than timber shelters, although several notable survivors give this category of construction some significance. The waiting room at Ballarat and the Romanesque Rookwood example were mentioned earlier, and interesting later buildings were erected at Pawkner (Victoria) and Rookwood. Both these later examples were constructed of brick with terracotta shingled roofs. The Victorian example used thin tapestry bricks while the Sydney building had red brickwork enlivened by a frieze of geometric timber fretwork.

With the awakening of interest in our cemeteries, care must be taken to ensure that all components are respected. Cemetery shelters are no less a part of our heritage than tombstones, cemetery planting or epitaphs. Some shelters have recently been restored and many others are in urgent need of care lest they go the same way of the mortal remains they cover.
REFERENCES

3. Atteridge, op. cit., p.331
5. J.C. Loudon, On the laying out, planting, and managing of cemeteries; and on the improvement of churchyards, 1843, quoted in Lampton, op. cit., p.100.
17. Drawing (dated 1903) and contract (dated 24 October 1904) held by John Vernon, architect, Ballarat.
18. This shelter was restored in 1978 by the Maldon Restoration Fund.
19. Doncaster - Templestowe Historical Society Newsletter, February 1979. This structure has now been relocated to the front lawn of Schramm's Cottage, Doncaster.
21. See E. Graeme Robertson, Cast Iron Decoration, A World Survey, for a discussion of this firm and their manufacturing activities.
23. Warrnambool Standard, 21 August 1889, 12 February 1890, tender notice for 'shelter shed' at Warrnambool Cemetery.