

# 10,000 mile pilgrimage to Epsom

30 June 2024



John Bates, grandson of Beatrice Bates, travelled over 10,000 miles from Australia to Horton Cemetery in Epsom to pay his respects to Beatrice. His grandmother is one of 9000 buried in Europe's largest and now abandoned asylum cemetery. The **Friends of Horton Cemetery** continue to battle to retrieve this important graveyard from a property speculator. A **petition**, already signed by over 1200 supporters, calls on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to change its damaging opinion that the Cemetery is "amenity woodland".

Here is John Bates' personal account of his May 2024 pilgrimage from Adelaide to Epsom.

In loving memory of Beatrice Miriam Bates, a woman of enduring strength and grace, whose life and legacy continue to resonate deeply within our family. Beatrice's journey came to an end in 1933 at West Park Hospital in Epsom, Surrey, leaving behind a mystery that lingered for decades. It was a personal mission of mine to uncover the truth of her final resting place, a mission that revealed not only her burial site but also a profound connection to our family's history.

Beatrice Miriam Bates was laid to rest in Horton Cemetery, a place that, despite the passage of time, faced the threat of being erased by development. Discovering her burial site through ancestry records was a pivotal moment, one that brought closure to our family and deepened our understanding of Beatrice's life. Horton Cemetery, overgrown and largely forgotten by many, stands as a testament to the lives of those who came before us, including Beatrice.

In 2024, ninety-one years after Beatrice's passing, I made a personal pilgrimage from Australia to Horton Cemetery. Walking around the overgrown grounds, I felt the weight of history and the importance of preserving this sacred space. The memorial at the entrance stands as a solitary guardian of the memories held within, a symbol of resistance against the encroaching tide of development.

The 'Friends of Horton Cemetery' have been instrumental in championing the cause to protect this site. Their dedication ensures that the stories of those buried there, including Beatrice's, are remembered and honoured. It is a cause that resonates deeply with me, as I believe in the importance of preserving Horton Cemetery for all the souls who rest there and for the relatives who seek a connection to their past.

Beatrice's story, accessible to all through the efforts of the 'Friends of Horton Cemetery,' shines a light on her resilience and spirit. Her life, though marked by challenges, is a testament to the courage and strength that define our family. Her memory serves as a beacon, guiding us to cherish our heritage and to honour the lives of those who came before us.

As we reflect on Beatrice's life, we are reminded of the importance of family, history, and the relentless pursuit of truth. Her legacy is a testament to the enduring power of love and remembrance. Through the efforts to preserve Horton Cemetery, Beatrice and all those resting there are given the respect and recognition they deserve.

In honour of Beatrice Miriam Bates, let us continue to share her story and all the stories of those buried in Horton Cemetery and protect the places that hold our collective memories. Her spirit lives on in each of us, a symbol of resilience and hope for generations to come.

Rest in peace, dear Beatrice. Your story will never be forgotten.

With all our love,

Your Grandson.... John E. M. Bates.

Beatrice Bates full story can be read on The Friends of Horton Cemetery **website HERE**