

**MEDIA UPDATE**  
**2010**

**28 September**

### **Southport Cemetery discovery highly significant**

Remains discovered in the Southport General Cemetery during investigative works by archaeologists from the University of Queensland Culture and Heritage Unit on behalf of the Gold Coast Rapid Transit project will be returned to the cemetery and reinterred today.

The investigative work was being done to clarify the existence of unknown, unmarked grave sites in a small area of land in the south-east corner of the cemetery that will be acquired by the project to accommodate road-widening activities on Queen St, Southport.

In June and July during the course of the investigations some ground disturbance that indicated a possible grave shaft was identified.

At a depth of 1.8 metres the archaeologists carefully exhumed four human teeth, small pieces of a badly fragmented coffin and poorly preserved human remains. The coffin pieces and human remains were taken to the University of Queensland for scientific examination.

Almost all the wood of the coffin had disappeared but four coffin handles were evident along with coffin nails and the remnants of a metal chest plate on the outside of the coffin lid.

In his report UQ archaeologist Dr Jonathan Prangnell notes the find is highly significant since it represents the first excavated Australian example of a satin covered coffin. The coffin was particularly ornate and is also unique among those excavated to date in Queensland.

The coffin was trimmed with an iron alloy with decorative motifs on the lid and metal strips around the top edge.

Dr Prangnell concluded the coffin contained the remains of a young adult approximately 180cm to 190cm tall buried sometime between 1890 and 1920. Age was determined by the level of wear on the teeth which was minimal.

Unfortunately, because of poor preservation none of the excavated items provide any definitive information regarding the sex of the individual or any clues to an identity.

This morning a religious celebrant will perform a short ecumenical service as a mark of respect. A special marker has been produced indicating the role the Gold Coast Rapid Transit project and the UQ archaeologists played in finding the lost grave.

The plaque reads 'In memory and respect to the soul of the unmarked grave. Discovered during early work for the Gold Coast Rapid Transit project by archaeologists from the University of Queensland Culture and Heritage Unit.'

#### **Gold Coast Rapid Transit project**

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