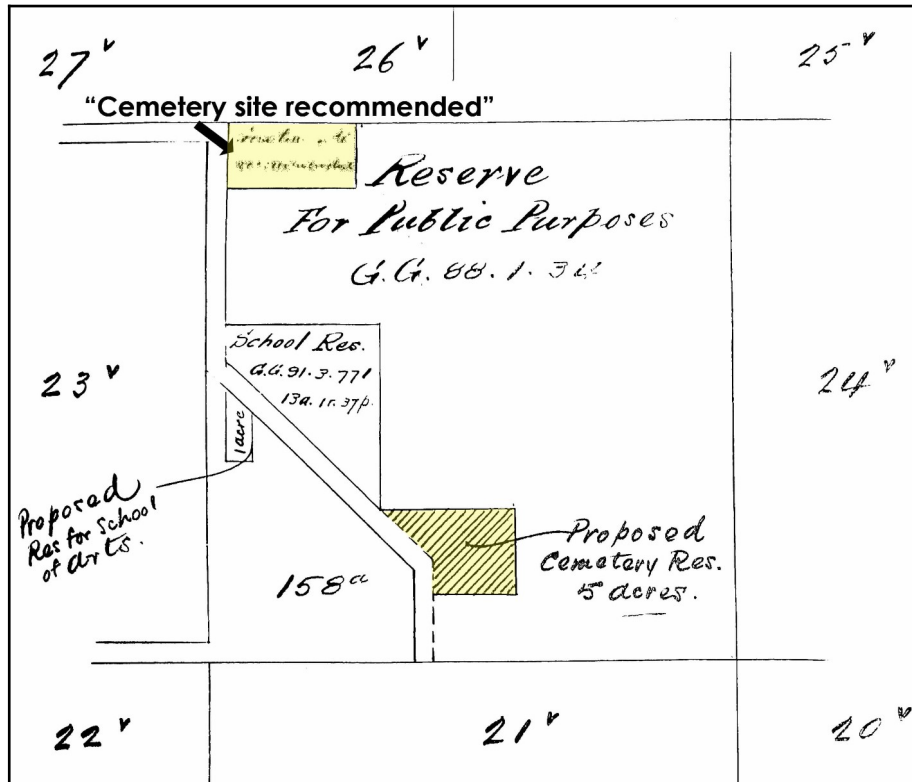


A Cemetery for Teutoburg (now Witta)

Only weeks after Carl Thiedecke opened the Maleny Provisional School in October 1892 (it became the Teutoburg Provisional School shortly afterwards), he penned a petition to the Queensland Department of Public Lands on behalf of his community. Signed by Martin Nothling (Secretary) and many local residents, they requested five acres of Crown land for a public cemetery on the Reserve for Public Purposes, south-east of the school.¹



A circa early 1893 sketch from the Land Commissioner showing the community's proposed cemetery site and that recommended by the government. Also showing a proposed 1-acre School of Arts Reserve. Queensland State Archives.

Ludwig Bergann (Secretary)² sent a follow-up letter in April 1893 enquiring about its survey. The Land Commissioner responded that a site on the north-west corner of the Reserve was more suitable. They were "well pleased" with this suggestion, hoping it might be surveyed at an early date? It was. The government gazetted it in July 1893 although small amendments were subsequently made to its boundaries.³

They had land, now they needed Trustees. An advertisement was placed in *The Moreton Mail* that "A Public Meeting will be held at Mr Vandreike's residence on Saturday, November 25 1893, at 2 p.m., to appoint Trustees of the Cemetery at Teutoburg. By Order, W. Sommer."⁴ This meeting elected the following Trustees:

Wilhelm Sommer (Chairperson)
William Simpson (Secretary)

Carl Martin Nothling (Treasurer)
Hermann Paul Hellmuth Rabehl

Ludwig (Louis) Tesch⁵

1 Cemetery Reserve 252, Parish of Maleny; Teutoburg Trustees and cemetery correspondence (Teutoburg) in the Nambour Heritage Library, Sunshine Coast Council.

2 Although Ludwig Bergann signed the letter, it was written by Carl Thiedecke whose English was excellent.

3 *Queensland Government Gazette*, 29 July 1893, p701 and 30 December 1893, p1183.

4 *The Moreton Mail*, 3 November 1893.

5 *The Tesch family: pioneers of the Logan and the Blackall Range* by Marjorie Neil, published 2004, p48: "Ludwig Tesch...was appointed to the first Teutoburg Cemetery Board and remained on that board for the whole of its existence...At the time of the closure of the Board, confusion was caused to government officials because they believed that Ludwig Tesch and Louis Tesch were two people and not the same person."

When their election became public, not everyone was pleased. Three days after the meeting, Frederick Warne wrote to the Queensland Colonial Secretary protesting that the election of Trustees had been unconstitutional. He listed various points of contention (insufficient notice, meeting held in an out-of-the-way place, not enough attendees) and closed with:

*"The whole issue of having a cemetery originated with W. Sommer for the purpose of obtaining the £50 Cemetery grant."*⁶

Warne requested an investigation before they could be officially confirmed as Trustees. Instead, the Queensland Government asked those involved in the election for their version of events. After explaining the situation, the government chose to gazette the Trustees already elected. Informed of this decision, Warne complained to the Queensland Governor, only to be told that the Trustees would be gazetted. Unprepared to let it rest, he advised the Department of Public Lands that he had been directed by Ludwig Bergann, Rudolph Manitzky and others to petition the Queensland Legislative Assembly for an enquiry. Was the Legislative Assembly petitioned? There is no record on file but Nothling, Rabehl, Simpson, Sommer and Tesch were gazetted as Trustees for the Reserve for Cemetery in the Parish of Maleny in March 1894.

Operating under *The Cemetery Act of 1865*, the Trustees at Teutoburg had to follow the rules and regulations relating to general meetings, election of office bearers, banking, applications for burial, depth and size of graves, the keeping of a cemetery plan and burial register, as well as setting fees such as 5 shillings for a single grave in open ground to £1 for the smallest private grave. These details, and more, were ratified at a meeting in June 1894 and gazetted in January 1895 by the Queensland Government.

Until 1944, the cemetery remained under the "Teutoburg Cemetery Trust". This ended with the Landsborough Shire Council's decision to assume all seven cemeteries within its boundaries. They were generally neglected, Witta's a "wilderness" owing to a shortage of funds and labour. When its Trustees were asked to resign, Carl August Harch, Daniel Sommer (junior), Louis Tesch and Frederick Vandreike did. The Lands Department replacing them with "The Council of the Shire of Landsborough" as the Witta Cemetery's sole Trustee.



From *Lutherans on the Cow End of the Blackall Range*, pp 53-54.

Desley Malone
Maleny Historical Memories

⁶ Only the previous year, Wilhelm Sommer had resigned as Secretary of the Teutoburg School Building Committee over tension with Frederick Warne.