

Family tie leads to help

By DANIELLE STREET

MIKE Coleman always knew he had family buried in Symonds Street Cemetery, but it was a "disgusting" act of vandalism that bought him closer to his heritage.

When Mr Coleman heard about the Nazi insignia that had been spray-painted on around 20 headstones at the historic graveyard last month, his first instinct was to offer to help clean-up.

"Because we have got some relatives buried out there, we thought we better jump straight in and offer some assistance. And it was something that we were obviously passionate about so we offered our services free of charge."

Mr Coleman runs the New Zealand distribution of Cold Jet, a global company that specialises in non-abrasive cleaning using carbon dioxide.

By the time he got to the cemetery the marble headstones had already been cleaned by council contractors using solvents.

But the chemical-free cleaning method used by Cold Jet was perfect for treating the granite headstones, without causing further damage.

However, the delicate sandstone graves are more problematic.

"The sandstone is very soft. You just have to touch it and it's crumbling," he says.



Community spirit: Mike Coleman outside the Cold Jet workshop where the carbon dioxide was manufactured for cleaning the gravestones.

Photo: DANIELLE STREET

"I don't think it is going to be possible to remove that stain without damaging the sandstone."

Unfortunately, some of these disintergrating headstones belong to his relatives, the Ehrenfrieds.

"They were the first settlers into Auckland and they really are just a direct blood-

line down to the common family on my father's side."

As reported in *Auckland City Harbour News* on October 24, three young men have been charged with wilful damage for spraying black swastika and other Nazi insignia on the grave-stones.

The trio is now remanded

on bail until mid-November.

"That was just such a cowardly act to do to the dead. It really disgusted me," Mr Coleman says.

"The justice that is going to be dealt out to that doesn't even measure up to the crime they committed."

The head of a Jewish burial society says he cannot

fathom what the vandals were thinking.

Malcolm Silverman, chairman for Auckland's Chevra Kadisha, met with mayor Len Brown this week to discuss the best way to restore the remaining stones.

Also on the agenda was how best to protect the area from future vandalism,

our e-edition has more

Go to aucklandcityharbournews.co.nz and click Latest Edition to see a rally against anti-Semitism held at the cemetery.



Clean up: Mike Coleman cleaned four granite headstones at the Symonds Street Cemetery.

whether surveillance, better lighting, fencing, or a combination of all three.

"The problem with fencing is you don't give the public the ability to walk through and look at the historic data," Mr Silverman says. "By fencing it off to try and stop hooligans coming and, you are closing it off to genuinely interested people," he says.

He says the council provided extra lighting awhile ago but "unfortunately it was not enough".

Kiwi hunkers down as Sandy wreaks havoc on New York

By DANIELLE STREET

Hurricane Sandy may be fading away, but the scars she left on America's east coast will remain for decades.

The so-called "frankenstorm" has killed at least 50 people in nine states and brought the city that never sleeps to a grinding halt.

The 128kmh winds and heavy rain forced evacuations of much of New York's coastal areas, caused power cuts across lower Manhattan, and flooded streets and subways.

Sandy also left at least 65 dead in her wake across the Caribbean as she hurtled to the United States.

While mother nature

played havoc with the mid-Atlantic, New Zealanders at home could only watch, sending messages to friends and relatives via social media.

Aucklander Patrick Watson was on the receiving end of some of the well-wishes as he sat out the storm in his Harlem abode.

The Ponsonby resident is in New York for a few months to help set up an espresso bar with some fellow New Zealanders.

"I'm in an old brick building which feels pretty solid but the wind made it sway a bit, and the windows rattled and you could see debris flying about outside."

He says his neighbourhood was "incredibly empty"

in the hours leading up to the storm's surge, with people only venturing out for necessities.

In some areas stores were completely ravaged of supplies, leaving those unprepared in search of food.

"I talked to my boss who lives downtown and he didn't have power or cell-phone coverage. He and his wife had to walk about 40 blocks uptown just to plug in their chargers and find a signal, and all the shops were sold out of everything," Mr Watson says.

Police and fire department presence was much more prevalent on the streets, as officials directed people to local government websites to keep informed.



Surveillance: Firefighters drive through flood waters left from Hurricane Sandy in Queens, New York.

Photo: REUTERS/KEITH BEDFORD



Witness: Ponsonby resident Patrick Watson says many people are concerned about the storm's effect on public transport.

The subway system is a major concern, as "almost everyone relies on public transport", Mr Watson says.

Metro Transportation Authority chairman Joseph Lohta says staff have star-

ted assessing the damage, but it could be days before water is pumped out of flooded subways.

"In 108 years, our employees have never faced a challenge like the one that

confronts us now," he says.

Forecasting firms are estimating the damage caused by Sandy to be in the ballpark of \$50 billion, however the true cost on human lives is yet to be counted.

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