

Head of CIB under suspicion after shooting at Royal Park

This story takes us back one hundred years to a time when John O'Connell Brophy was the head of Victoria Police's CIB. He had an impressive service record and was well known by the community, media, criminals and his name was mentioned in the halls of Parliament. But none of this protected him from accusations of corruption when he was shot by masked men in Royal Park.

John O'Connell Brophy was a soldier before joining the police force in 1900. Over the next four decades he worked on many famous cases including the notorious Gun Alley murder in the early 1920s, the Tuckerman case (1924) and the Pyjama Girl mystery (1934).

Brophy and his colleague, Piggot, were well known in Melbourne's criminal underworld. It was said "Ashes to ashes and dust to dust; if Piggott don't get you then Brophy must".

Late one May evening in 1936, planning to meet with an underworld informant, Brophy drove to Royal Park in a borrowed car with friends. Instead of meeting his contact, two masked men appeared out of the dark and shot at him, leaving Brophy wounded, the car out of action and two very frightened women in the back seat.

It is a story that led to false reports, intrigue and deliberate cover-ups. Crucial files relating to the crime went missing, his assailant was never charged and, despite a Royal Commission into the affair, the case was mysteriously dropped.

Two years later Brophy retired, having never fully recovered from being shot in the neck. Ten years later, aged 68, John O'Connell Brophy died, and was buried at Coburg Cemetery.

Researcher: Diane Gardner, FOCC member

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John O'Connell Brophy, CIB chief.

A Word from the President

I'm delighted to bring you another newsletter only a few months after the last one. Thanks heaps to editor, Cheryl Griffin, and the researchers who sent in stories and images of the people of Coburg Cemetery to make this happen. Current pandemic-related restrictions on social gathering including cemetery tours and public presentations had Lee and I recently thinking "outside the box". We grabbed umbrellas and braved the weather in early May to film a short tour including a few of the fascinating characters buried at Coburg. Although it was done with amateur equipment, very little

preparation and a fair dose of nerves, a video-editing friend shaped the footage into something watchable so that Moreland City Libraries could host the videos on their YouTube channel. During the library's Facebook Live event on 4 June I encouraged people to check out the videos to hear more about these characters. Links to the videos are on the back page of this newsletter. Despite the weather, the casual, unscripted presentation and our bedraggled appearance, I hope you enjoy the journey! And yes, I know you've heard this many times before, but stay tuned, our new website is coming soon! Stay well and stay warm! Julie

The untimely death of a returned serviceman

Arthur Franzi never knew what hit him. After work on a Tuesday evening in 1927, travelling at high speeds, as young men often do, Arthur was riding pillion on the back of his workmate's, Joseph Davies', motorbike. Joseph miscalculated a turn and hit the stone abutments on a bridge at Dobie, just out of Ararat.



Dobie Bridge. Courtesy Ararat Advertiser, 19 Apr 2018.

Joseph was killed instantly but Arthur was still alive, although unconscious. A passing motorist delivered him to Ararat Hospital but he had suffered a broken neck and was dead on arrival. Someone then had to go and tell his young wife, Florence, help comfort his three very young children and break the news to his parents.



'The Signaller' by George Bell. Courtesy Australian War Memorial.

Arthur had learnt his trade as a signaller in WWI. He enlisted in 1915 and was sent to France via Egypt soon after completing his signal training at Royal Park Barracks.

It seems he had not met Florence before the war as his letters all came from his parents and his father was listed as next of kin. At several stages his worried family lost track of him. They wrote many times to the Army asking if he was wounded as his letters home indicated that he had not heard from them. They knew they had written over 20 letters as they had numbered them all.

Arthur suffered shell concussion in 1917 and was deaf for some months. This caused an ailment recorded as 'effort syndrome' with symptoms of heart palpitations and dizziness, sufficient to cause fainting episodes, but it was not heart disease. The root cause was significant anxiety. We would now call it PTSD.

After several spells in English hospitals, Arthur was discharged as medically unfit and returned to Australia.

Arthur had married Florence Stewart soon after he returned home from the war. They had been married only seven years and had only recently moved to Ararat, with plans to raise their sons enjoying a country life. Florence now faced life alone, raising three little fatherless boys.

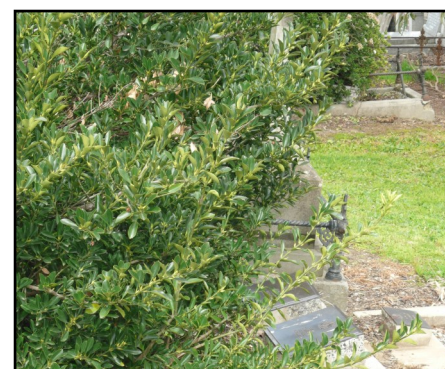
Florence and their son, Charles, who both lived long lives, are buried with Arthur at Coburg Cemetery. Their gravestone has now been reinstated as part of the Headstone Reinstatement project managed by the Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust.

Researcher: Dr Jan Penney, Historian, Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust member.

World Environment Day - 5 June

Although we have not been able to enjoy any of our usual tours, walks and working bees over the past few months, there is no doubt that Coburg Cemetery is a constant reminder of how wonderful it is to have a space like this in a busy suburban environment.

As cars whizz down Bell Street, drivers are often unaware that they are passing a cemetery. The creatures that call it home are fortunate to live in such a peaceful and beautiful environment. Coburg Cemetery - well worth a visit!



Join FOCC and get involved!

We are a small group with some big ideas! If you'd like to get more involved in FOCC activities we are always looking for members and people who can research, write stories, take photos, present on tours, hunt up funding sources and promote FOCC activities. Contact us to find out more: focc.group@gmail.com

Adonoran Ramsdell - US Civil War veteran

Fifty years after he served in the United States Civil War, Adonoran Ramsdell was buried half a world away in Coburg Cemetery in 1916.

Adonoran was born in 1842 at Newton, Massachusetts. He enlisted as a Private in the 1st Cavalry Regiment in 1861, describing himself as a 19 year old carpenter. He was promoted to Full Corporal, then to Full Quarter Master Sergeant and finally mustered out at Richmond, Virginia in 1865.

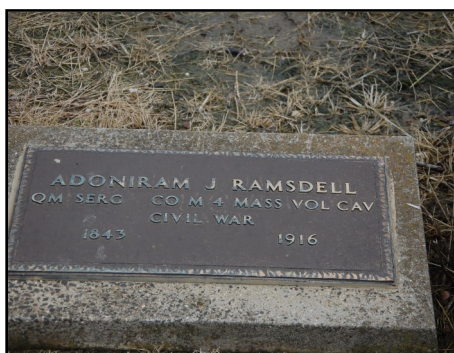
In 1871 he married Adelaide Rumrell in Rhode Island, but only four years later Adelaide died of diphtheria.

At 35, Adonoran left America for Australia and four years later was living in Melbourne with his young new wife, Grace Lulu McLean. They had married in North Fitzroy and later lived in Bent Street, Northcote and Rutland Street, Clifton Hill. Over the next two decades, Grace and Adonoran had six children, all born in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. Adonoran worked as a carpenter while Grace raised their family.

In 1908, Adonoran applied for a US military pension and five years later received \$25 a month. He died at the Melbourne Hospital in 1916 aged 73 years. Grace was granted a US military widow's pension until she died at Bairnsdale, 21 years later.

In 1991 the American Veterans Administration provided a bronze plaque which was placed on Adonoran Ramsdell's grave. Unfortunately, only this plaque identifies his grave's location.

Researcher: David Weatherill, FOCC member



Cemeteries on Facebook

If, like many of us, you are interested in the fascinating world of cemeteries around the world, and if you have a Facebook account, here are a few groups and pages that you might want to check out. Some are local (Melbourne) "Friends" groups and all post interesting pictures, or ask for help or advice. Just put these titles into the search bar on Facebook:

- Friends of Williamstown Cemetery
 - Friends of Cheltenham and Regional Cemeteries Inc.
 - Residents and Friends of St Kilda Cemetery
 - Friends of Boroondara - Kew Cemetery
 - Cemetery Ramblers Australia
 - Australian Cemeteries
 - Australian Cemeteries Group
 - Clunes Cemetery
 - Rookwood Cemetery
 - Burwood Cemetery (yes, with an "a")
 - The Cemetery
 - The Cemetery Club
- And, of course:
- Friends of Coburg Cemetery Inc.

Early burials at Coburg Cemetery

The first recorded burial at Coburg Cemetery was that of Margaret Sullivan, born at Plenty Road, Darebin Creek (now Preston) around 1855. She was one of ten children born to John Sullivan, a wood carter, and his wife Bridget Baker. A domestic servant, she was almost 20 when she died on 17 June 1875 of pneumonia and phthisis (pulmonary tuberculosis). She is buried in the Roman Catholic section of the Cemetery with her mother Bridget and one-day-old niece, Alice Walsh. Both Bridget and Alice died in 1898.

There was nothing out of the ordinary about the lives of the Sullivans, but Margaret's cause of death – pneumonia and tuberculosis – is a reminder that there were no effective drug-based treatments for either condition at that time - something we can relate to in 2020 as scientists are

scrambling to find a vaccine for COVID-19. In 1875, the widespread use of antibiotics and vaccines was still sixty years into the future. Alice's death reminds us that the infant mortality rate was extremely high in the nineteenth century when most families experienced the pain of losing children either at birth or soon afterwards.

Margaret's burial was not the first in Coburg Cemetery, but was the first where a record of burial still exists. The cemetery was established in 1859 and burials began soon afterwards. Early records were not well kept and many registers have not survived. It is likely that about 250 burials (possibly more) took place between 1860 and 1875.

Using death and funeral notices, as well as newspaper articles on Trove



(National Library of Australia), we have begun to uncover some of the burials not recorded on the GMCT Deceased Search database. The Genealogical Society of Victoria (GSV) has records of some of the early monumental inscriptions, but not all.

If you can add to our knowledge of the earliest burials in the cemetery (pre-June 1875), particularly those where there is no headstone, please send us an email with the subject line *Attention: Editor, Buried Treasures.*

Researcher: David Weatherill, FOCC member

The Gilberts of Gilbert Road, Preston

Pigs were big business in Preston in the mid-1800s. William Gilbert and his wife Charity, who had arrived from Cornwall with six children, bought a 17-acre farm on the Pentridge side of Preston, at the end of a long dirt road.

At this time pig farms and bacon factories were well established in the area. The Gilberts set up their piggery next to another prominent family of the region, the Staples.

William named the track leading to his property 'Gilbert's Road'. The name stayed and now Gilbert Road

is a major Preston thoroughfare.

At 78 William died leaving property worth £510.00. Charity died the next year and the pig farm passed to their son Joseph. Joseph had married the neighbours' girl, Elizabeth Staples. Together they continued the family business for many years.

William, Charity, their sons William and Joseph and Joseph's wife, Elizabeth, are all buried at Coburg Cemetery in an unmarked grave.

Researcher: Colleen Burns, FOCC member

Friends of Coburg Cemetery Inc.

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Missing the Cemetery? Virtual Cemetery Tours Now Online

Why not treat yourself to one of our three Virtual Tours of the Cemetery.

You can follow the links below, or search for Friends of 'Coburg Cemetery YouTube'

- Part 1: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tutMkbUo_6o
- Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKgrQzAZMOY>
- The Facebook Live presentation for Moreland Libraries: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDvONy1zFMI>



Merri Creek and Coburg Cemetery. Date unknown. Image from *Friends of Merri Creek* campaign video. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1061246320619919>