



LUCKY DIP TOUR

Sunday 9 October 2022 at 2pm
at Coburg Cemetery



Join us on this all-new tour devised by local historian and FOCC committee member Cheryl Griffin.

Remember the Lucky Dips of your childhood? You were never quite sure what treasure you were selecting, but you knew it would be something good.

Well, this is what Cheryl is offering on this tour - stories to amaze and move you. All new to our cemetery walks and all treasures that have never before been revealed.

With titles such as 'An angel at my table', 'If the trees could talk', 'Drowned together hand in hand' and 'What an amazing woman!' the stories presented on this walk will leave you wanting more.

Bookings essential: focc_group@gmail.com

cost \$10
\$2 for members



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Mickleham Methodist Cemetery - Pioneer Park

For some years the Craigieburn Historical Interest Group (CHIG) has worked with the Uniting Church and now Hume Council to turn the old Mickleham Methodist Cemetery into a pioneer park.

The one acre block has only 5 or 6 grave sites remaining, though CHIG has established through burial records, around 100 people were buried there from 1856 until it was closed about 30 years later. The first burial was recorded in 1856 and the last in 1888. There was a modest Methodist church built of bluestone on the site which also served as a school. The cemetery was located to the rear of the site behind the church. After only 30 odd years it was decided that the church building had serious cracks and was unsafe. It was dismantled and a new, simple timber church was built a few miles to the west in what was the Mickelham township. A separate school was built opposite the re-established church.

In 2019 Hume Council voted to take over responsibility for the cemetery from the Uniting Church. The council keeps the site mown and CHIG members weed and spray the grave sites. Our group is not permitted to do much more at this stage.

Due to staff changes at council, an early plan to turn the old cemetery site into a pioneer park has



faltered. In the meantime, the Hume Parks Department are preparing to do an audit of the indigenous plants and grasses on the site and will suggest the best way to maintain the beautiful river red gums still growing on the block.

CHIG is still hopeful we can complete the conservation plan but move on to turning the cemetery site into a modest park. We don't envisage anything elaborate that would draw undue attention to the cemetery. This could inadvertently attract vandals to visit and damage the existing graves.

Yvonne Kernan, President CHIG and FOCC committee member

Eliza Russell, the first Australian flag seamstress

Enquiries to the FOCC website can yield some fascinating information. For family members looking for the grave of a loved one, asking FOCC to help can sometimes lead to a photograph of the grave, details of other family members or even discoveries that they are actually buried elsewhere.

These enquiries sometimes lead us to discover interesting information about unsung heroes and heroines buried at Coburg. We received a request recently for a photograph of the grave Eliza Ellen (Nellie) Russell who died in 1910. Her grave is substantial for a single seamstress from Coburg and the enquirer had explained she was the first person to sew the Australian flag.

On further research, we discovered that she was the sister-in-law of the flag and canvass goods pioneer in early Melbourne, Evan Evans. Eliza worked at his factory and he had purchased her grave. Evan and his wife are also buried at Coburg Cemetery. Evan Evans company still exists today, although no longer in the same family. It has moved from its prominent Elizabeth Street site, but remains a leading provider of flags and signs in both Australia and overseas.

However, there is a lot more to the life of Eliza. She was born in Dunolly in 1861, at the height of the goldrush. Her English family had moved to Van Diemen's Land in the mid-1800s, then when her father died Eliza moved to Melbourne to work in Evans' then curtain factory.

So what about that first Australian flag? In 1901, as a newly federated nation, Australia needed its own flag. A national competition to design one resulted in five children winning with very similar designs, but only one actual flag was presented. This design came from 14-year-old Ivor Evans – Evan's son and Eliza's nephew. To make the flag a reality, who better to ask than his aunt to sew together his design? Because of Ivor's request, Eliza became the first person in Australia to sew what we now know as our national flag.

Sadly, as is often the case, Eliza's contribution to our national heritage has been overlooked and there are no official records recognising her contribution. Local artists of Dunolly are determined to right that wrong. Eliza is featured at the Dunolly Women's Historical Art Trail and a petition has been started, calling on the Australian government to add Eliza's story to its official pages about the flag. You can support the petition and find out further information at: <https://chng.it/jrSrGpRnH4> or listen to a short ABC radio interview talking about Eliza here: <https://rb.gy/oghfgf>

Margaret Abbey, FOCC member



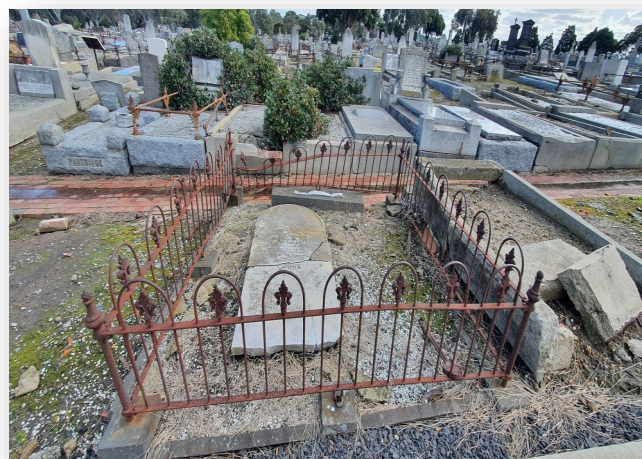
Above: Ivor Evans and the Australian flag he designed. Courtesy Dunolly Historical Society.



Eliza Russell's headstone at Coburg Cemetery.

Eliza Ellen (Nellie) Russell, died Carlton 2 January 1910 aged 48.

Graves featured in October's Lucky Dip Tour



Criticises royalty then thrown out of Parliament

Journalist turned politician, Ted Findley, had a tumultuous political career that saw him accused of sedition and expelled from the Labor party while a sitting member of the Parliament of Victoria.

Born on the Bendigo goldfields in the 1860s, Edward Findley had been working as a newspaper compositor when he established several weekly newspapers and became an active unionist and Labor party member. As Melbourne was pulling itself out of a devastating economic depression that saw unemployment, land value and public spending all take a massive dive, Ted got political and joined the Labor Party. He lobbied for more democratic franchise arrangements, a progressive tax system, a state bank, minimum wages, an eight-hour working day, a conciliation and arbitration system, stricter enforcement of the White Australia policy and better provision for the unemployed and the destitute.

Ted moved up the ranks of the Australasian Typographical Union to become its president and was also president of Trades Hall Council in the late 1890s. In 1900 Ted was elected to Parliament, representing the seat of Melbourne.

Only 7 months into his term, Ted was accused of sedition. He had reprinted an Irish newspaper article that criticised King George VII in the radical weekly

newspaper he helped establish, *The Tocsin*. He was expelled from the party and from Parliament, but his political life didn't end there. He went on to serve as a senator and sat on various royal commissions and select committees gaining a reputation as a hard-working and tenacious politician. He also sat as an honorary minister in the Fisher government.

He is described in government historical records as "a slight man with receding hair, a substantial moustache, large ears and humorous eyes". He was anti-war, pro-workers' rights, anti-conscription, a supporter of pensions and welfare and was concerned about the monopoly of the press and influence of newspaper owners over public opinion. When he was almost 50, Ted married Lilian Foyle, a Warrnambool photographer and activist. The Prime Minister of the day, Andrew Fisher, gave the bride away. Ted lived to 84 years of age and is buried at Coburg Cemetery with his parents and other members of the Findley family.

Adapted from research by Historian and FoCC member, Jan Penney and The Biographical Dictionary of The Australian Senate (<https://biography.senate.gov.au/edward-findley>)



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 more 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

A visit to Brighton Cemetery

On 31 July as part of Open House Melbourne, I visited Brighton Cemetery with a friend for a tour.

The volunteers or Brighton Cemeterians ran a general tour for Open House. At other times they run specialist tours on famous artists, war heroes, people with convict backgrounds etc who are buried in Brighton.

Our tour lasted about 90 minutes and we visited the modest graves of the famous Boyd family of artists, learning about their colourful lives.

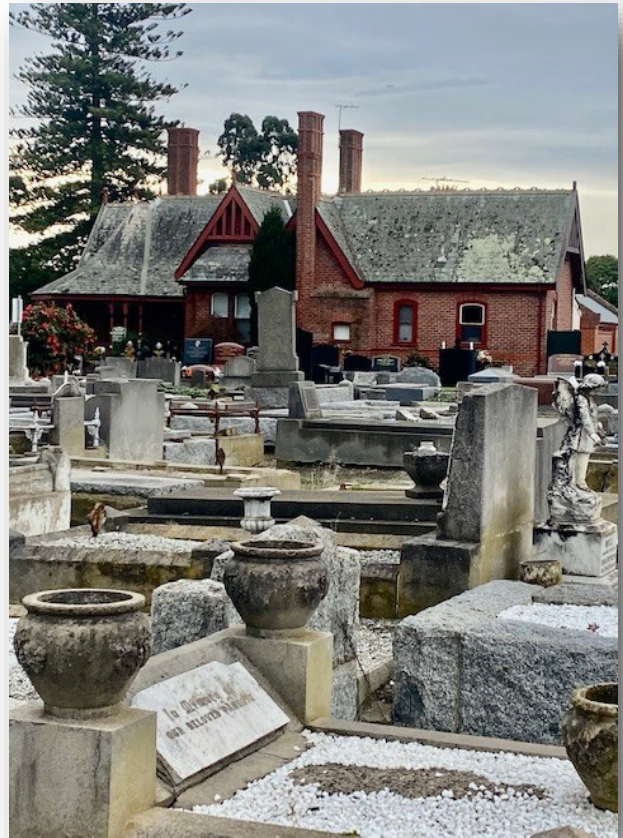
We also visited the grave of a 12 year old girl, Alma Tirtschke who was murdered in Gun Alley in 1921. The case received great publicity at the time and to add to the tragedy, police charged a man who lived in Gun Alley (near Little Lonsdale St) who was sentenced to death, only to be proved innocent many years later.

Other famous people buried at Brighton and included in the tour were Sir John Monash, Sir Thomas Bent and Squizzy Taylor (who has a family connection to Coburg Cemetery. Ed.)

The tour guide was very knowledgeable, a great storyteller and passionate about his involvement with the Brighton Cemetery. It was a terrific tour and I will certainly return for other tours in the future.

The Brighton Cemeterians are an enthusiastic and dedicated group. They do a great job and I would highly recommend taking one of their tours.

Yvonne Kernan (FOCC committee member)



A Word from the President

Winter is usually pretty inactive for FOCC, mostly because it's too cold for tours, but it is an active time for grave searching. It seems many people are sitting at home in front of their heaters, hunched over keyboards and building their family trees. This means we get more requests for grave searches than usual and the number of requests for grave photos on sites like Find-A-Grave stack up. Some of these requests lead to some interesting discoveries – you can read about a couple of them in this newsletter and hear more about their stories in upcoming tours.

The recent AGM and planning

meeting were well attended by a bunch of eager, active FOCCers who were full of plans and ideas and energy. We now have a much larger committee and several volunteers organising tours, maintaining the new noticeboard, planning future publications and meeting grave search requests. Plus there are lots of other ideas still cooking along on the back burners. Members are notified directly but others can keep an eye out for upcoming tours and activities on the FOCC website and Facebook page.

Hope you are staying well and warm and we'll see some of you at the October Lucky Dip tour! *Julie*

Friends of Coburg Cemetery Inc.

www.friendsofcoburgcemetery.com

Established 2011

President/Administrator: Julie Stratford
Treasurer/Administrator: Lee Anthony
Committee: Colleen and Gerry Burns, Cheryl Griffin, Kathleen Halfpenny, Yvonne Kernan, Kelly Morgan

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