

Thank You and Farewell to Founding Member

In sincere appreciation, we extend a big thank you to Lee Anthony for over 12 years of dedicated service to the Friends of Coburg Cemetery.

Since the organisation's 2011 inception, Lee has been a stalwart presence, undertaking major roles and responsibilities, sharing her love for the cemetery's natural environment.

Living across from the cemetery, Lee knows its ins and outs: history, interesting graves, famous and infamous occupants, stories, birdlife, graffiti, and even where the foxes live. As a founding member, Secretary, Treasurer, and event organiser, Lee conducted tours, grave searches, community presentations, and lobbied for action and support. She represented FoCC and her community on GMCT committees, and was a vital conduit of information to the local community.

As Lee moves away from this neighbourhood and steps aside from her FoCC role, we extend heartfelt thanks and best wishes for her future endeavours.

Inside this issue:

THANK YOU AND FAREWELL	1
A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT	1
DISCOVERING HIDDEN STORIES – A RESEARCHER'S JOURNEY	2-3
MEMBERS' STORIES	4-5
GRAVESIDE GARDENING	6

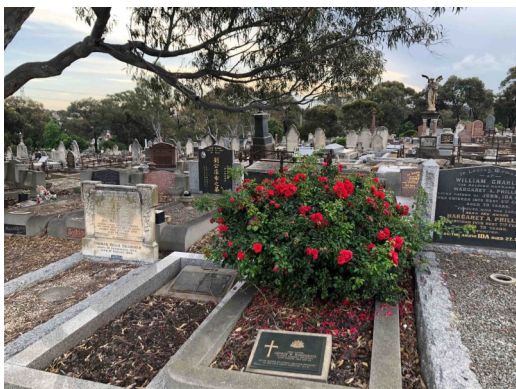


A Word from The President

Hello and welcome to the final newsletter of 2023!

It is exciting to write this for the first time as the new President. Firstly, I would like to again thank Lee Anthony and Julie Stratford for both the time they have given to the Friends of Coburg Cemetery and the encouragement and support they have given to me in becoming President. I couldn't have done it without you.

Reflecting on 2023, all I can say is wow! What a year it has been! We have seen some changes within the group, with some long standing and familiar faces stepping aside from their committee roles. We will miss them greatly. However this



has allowed us to welcome new ones in. Despite only holding two tours this year both were incredibly successful - they have led us to new members and an expanding audience. There has been a lot of behind the scenes work going on, answering grave search enquiries, researching and planning.

2024 is just around the corner and is already filled with many promising opportunities. We are eager to share it with you. We aim to continue to thrive, with many new connections, exciting discoveries and ideas coming together, some that have had to wait a little longer than anticipated to have their time in the spotlight. I assure you it will be well worth the wait!

With the weather warming up and hopefully some free time, what a great chance it is to take a deep dive into your family history - which may lead you back to the Coburg Cemetery. You just might find the talking point of Christmas dinner. Or maybe it will be the sunnier days and the opportunity to get out more and take a walk and some photos around the cemetery. We encourage you to share these discoveries with us and ask for assistance, we love being able to help with all things cemetery related. You too can have your own members' story featured in future newsletters.

On behalf of myself and the Friends of Coburg Cemetery we wish you a safe and happy holiday season and a wonderful new year. We look forward to seeing you all in 2024.

Regards, Kelly.

Discovering Hidden Stories – A Researcher's Journey

The research service provided by the Friends of Coburg Cemetery to members of the public is always greatly appreciated, but it can also be a trap as researchers start going down deep and fascinating rabbit holes!

Here Margaret Abbey, PSM, FoCC member and key grave searcher/researcher, gives us a snapshot of some of the interesting enquiries that she has responded to this year.



Vanessa lives in Perth and asked if we could provide a photo of her great grandmother's grave. When I located the grave I was interested in the inscription on the headstone that she was a pioneer of the Preston area. Vanessa has provided the following information and is very happy for it to be shared with members.

Phyllis was born in Preston in 1867. Her parents were James Thomas Young and Ann Elizabeth Shepherd. She married Charles Allan Stephenson on 27 February 1888 at the free Church of England, Moor Street, Fitzroy. She first met Charles when he arrived at the Shepherd property, recently migrating from England, carrying his swag and looking for employment.

Shepherd's Run was the property of Phyllis's grandparents, Timothy Shepherd and Harriet Shepherd nee Brooks. The Shepherd family can lay claim to being one of Preston's earliest settlers.



In 1840 a parcel of land, bounded by High Street and the Merri Creek to the east and west, and Bell Street and Murray Road (to the south and north) was purchased by James Mitchell. James Mitchell, in turn, leased the entire 312 acres to Timothy Shepherd for use as a sheep run. The lease was signed in October 1856, but it is thought that the Shepherd family had been there for several years beforehand as Anna Eliza Young (the granddaughter of Timothy and Harriet) was born on *Shepherd's Run* in 1851.

Phyllis and Charles owned and operated a business known as *Stephenson's – Central Fruit and Vegetable Mart*, located at 357 High Street, Preston. Vanessa has provided these wonderful family photos.



Kathleen contacted us because she wanted to find the grave of her great, great Aunt Deborah. It is an unmarked grave, but when I visited to take a photo for her, there were new (although artificial) flowers on the grave, suggesting that someone had visited recently. Kathleen was also keen to find where Deborah's husband, Robert, was buried. Deborah was the only person buried in the grave at Coburg. Following some research, I was able to locate Robert in the Newstead cemetery. The Secretary of the Newstead Cemetery Trust very kindly took a photo of Robert's unmarked grave so that I could pass it on to Kathleen.

Discovering Hidden Stories – A Researcher's Journey (continued)

Ian contacted us regarding his great, great grandfather, Moses Rowland, sometimes called Thomas Rowlings, who had been a convict transported to Port Arthur from Wales in 1824. He became a free man and travelled to Victoria but was 'always on the wrong side of the law' and ended up in Pentridge Prison where he died in March 1864.

A commercial website for searching grave locations suggested that Moses was buried at Pentridge Prison cemetery, so Ian contacted the Friends in case this meant he was buried at Coburg. A search of Moses's death certificate indicated that he was actually buried at Melbourne General Cemetery. I contacted their cemetery office and they confirmed that he was buried in an open mass (paupers) grave. So whilst I could tell Ian that Moses was buried at Melbourne General Cemetery, we could not give him an actual location. I found it was generally the practice that private graves were then placed on top of the open mass grave area. I also noted that the death certificate was completed by a senior constable at Pentridge, so there was not the usual family information. Ian pondered, therefore, how did Moses's wife and family learn of his death.

This example is a salutary reminder to always check primary sources of information wherever possible.

SCHEDULE B.				
1864 DEATHS in the District of <i>Pentridge</i> in the Colony				
No.	DESCRIPTION.		Cause of Death, Duration of last illness, Medical Attendant by whom certified, and when he last saw deceased.	Name and Surname of Father and Mother, if known, with Rank or Profession.
	When and where Died.	Name and Surname, Rank or Profession.		
163	28 th February 1864 Pentridge	Mary Ann High	Female 21 months	Stephen Knight Harry Belshaw Labourer
164	11 th March 1864 Pentridge Footscray	Thomas Rowlings Bricklayer	Male 54 years	Diarrhoea of the Lower Intestine 7 th of March 1864

Some of the saddest stories relate to the burial of young children. Two cousins from Devon in the UK have been searching for Rosa for the past 30 years. She married Arthur Trott in Somerset in 1903 and they then moved to Melbourne. They had twin girls who both died within 13 days of being born in February 1914 and were buried at Coburg. Sadly, while we know that they were buried at Coburg, GMCT confirmed that they were not successful in finding the exact location, as it is likely that they were buried in 'public baby graves'.

That is the last we hear of Rosa. Her husband married twice, in Sydney and in Adelaide, but there is no record of a death

or divorce of wives one and two. I was hoping, having searched so many other records, that the birth or death records of her daughters may give the cousins a clue about what happened to Rosa. Sadly no. The GMCT confirmed they had no further information to help find Rosa. As Bob said, "we have been searching for her for 30 years and haven't given up yet!"

Another recent enquiry came from Pat who was looking for the burial of a 5 month old girl Phyllis. The deceased search function on the GMCT website showed that Phyllis was buried in Roman Catholic Common Graves of Section X, Grave 1X. There were 1,067 babies listed in this area. GMCT confirmed that this was the public baby grave, located near the north western corner of the cemetery. So again, we know that baby Phyllis was buried at Coburg, but not exactly where.

And finally, Mary from Kilkenny in Ireland contacted us as she will be visiting Melbourne in February next year. She was looking for John Doyle who came to Australia in the hope of improving his health. John's uncle was a highly respected Roman Catholic priest in St Arnaud. As well as providing her with details of the grave, I was also able to introduce her to Trove and the immense number of articles about the work of Rev. Gerald Doyle and about the death of John, whose grave is in the picture below.



Responding to these enquiries shows how important the cemetery is to enabling people to connect with their long distance family members, and that each one has a story to tell, something that we should never forget.

Margaret Abbey, PSM, Volunteer, Friends of Coburg Cemetery

Members' Stories—How We Became Involved

Yvonne

I visited the Coburg Cemetery quite a number of years ago to locate my great grandmother, Bridget Lavelle's grave. She had come to Coburg from County Mayo in the 1870s. She was an enterprising woman from humble beginnings who ended up having a large family and owning several properties around Bell and Munro Streets in Coburg. Her husband, Patrick, with other immigrants from Mayo, became road builders in the Coburg and Brunswick area. I'd planned to write a family history of the Lavelles, my paternal grandparents.

On that first visit to Coburg I coincidentally met members of the FOCC group including Julie, Lee and Cheryl. I was very impressed with the enthusiasm of the members who helped me get started with grave locations and the family history. Cheryl took on the paid project of researching the details and overseeing the production of a beautiful book on the Lavelles. I will always be grateful for her energy and patience in completing the work. I joined this impressive group and have remained a member of FoCC ever since.

I love the cemetery tours and greatly admired the tenacity of Lee and Julie in negotiating with the GMTC to reinstate the salvaged old headstones. It was a *tour de force* and they saw it through to the end. I've become friends with Julie, Lee and Cheryl over the years and enjoy the company of the newer members I've met since.

Yvonne Kernan, FoCC Committee Member

Julie-Ann

How did I get here? No, it's not the story of evolution or creation. It's the story of how I became involved with Friends of Coburg Cemetery.

For the last 50 years I've had a great interest in tracing my family history. I love history but think that your own history is just as important as the famous or infamous characters found in textbooks. My mother would tell me tales of her childhood Sundays when she would accompany her grandmother on the tram from their home in South Melbourne to the end of the line in Coburg to visit her recently departed grandfather. Both my Nana and Pop Argaet now reside in the CoE H section of the Coburg Cemetery.

With this story in the back of my mind, we saw an advertisement in a community newsletter for a tour of the cemetery in early 2022, and Kelly (my daughter) and I jumped at the chance to come along. Following the amazing twilight tour, we did some investigation and located the unmarked site of the grave that took us there. I aim to have that rectified with a headstone in the near future to give a visual record of those resting there. We have since found several other family members who have ended their earthly journey at Coburg Pine Ridge Cemetery.

The week after that tour Kelly and I joined FoCC. We've taken a keen interest in the cemetery, researching, locating graves and helping with minor maintenance. At the last AGM I took on the role of Treasurer. FoCC is a small group of people with



diverse cemetery-related interests. I encourage all members to take part in the group's activities – whether that is planning, running or just participating in these events. Get involved – you don't know what you might find!

Julie-Ann Morgan, FoCC Committee Member

Kelly

I really can't add much more to my story of how I became involved with FoCC, as Julie-Ann's story is my story. But I will tell you how it influenced me.

Coburg Cemetery was always a place I wanted to visit, as strange as that sounds. Having visited numerous cemeteries all over Victoria from a young age (Thanks Mum!) I guess I grew fond of them. One cemetery I heard of frequently was Coburg Cemetery. As I became familiar with the local area I often envisioned the trips my grandma would make on Sundays to visit her grandfather when she was a child. Having seen other places of her stories, Coburg Cemetery was on the list.

Having said many times "We'll have to stop by the Argaet's one day", that day finally came along following the April 2022 Twilight Tour. From there on the visits haven't stopped, having found many other relatives resting here.

In August 2022, I attended the FoCC AGM, where I shyly put my hand up to join the committee not really knowing what I was getting myself into, but I'm glad I did! I have met a group of wonderful people with a mutual interest in dead people and their stories.

It's not just a cemetery, it's a history lesson, an art lesson, a cultural lesson. So many fascinating lives lead!

Fast forward a year and I'm now spending my Sunday afternoons in Coburg Cemetery. It is a really interesting place to take a walk. I became President following this year's AGM and look forward to the work we can do as a group in the future. Many exciting events await!

Kelly Morgan, FoCC President

Members' Stories—How We Became Involved (continued)

Allan

A SHORT STORY OF HOW AND WHY I BECAME A MEMBER
OF THE FRIENDS OF COBURG CEMETERY



Buried in Coburg Cemetery - A late 19th Century teenage photograph of the writer's great grandmother Margaret Barden taken in Spring Bay, East Coast Tasmania.

It was by pure happenstance that I learnt that my great grandmother was buried in Coburg Cemetery. While visiting Tasmania some years ago, I happened to visit the local museum in Oatlands, an old early settlement and historic village. During our personable chat, the local volunteer on duty at the time mentioned that the museum held a file under the name of 'Barden'. It transpired that the file contained a letter from Valerie, a soon to be known new cousin from North Blackburn, seeking any information about the Tasmanian Barden name/family. The letter by that time was several years old so I was not expecting Valerie's contact details to be correct. Fortunately, they were and Valerie and I made contact and discovered that we were indeed, quite closely related genealogically. Since then, Valerie, her sister Jan and myself have exchanged family genealogy information and stories (many kept secret by family members) about the

Barden clan in Ireland, Tasmania and Victoria. It was through Val and Jan's genealogical research efforts that I found out that my great grandmother Margaret Barden, was buried in Coburg Cemetery in 1918. Something that to my knowledge, no-one in my immediate Tasmanian family knew about.

My family history research has discovered many secrets about my family background and particular members. Matters of divorces, family disputes, religious differences, illicit affairs, illegitimate births and crimes have been hidden and kept secret. Like some other family stories, I have since ascertained that my great grandmother's life story is just one of several family stories that could easily be made into an interesting TV series!

Sadly, it was while on a visit from Hobart to Melbourne in 1918 to visit her daughter Violet, that my great grandmother succumbed to pneumonia and died in St. Vincent's Hospital at the age of 36. In her short life, she had given birth to, and raised 7 children, 1 being my grandfather. Eyebrow raising by the societal norms of today but in her day not necessarily so, especially for Irish Roman Catholics!

The discovery of my great grandmother's burial place was the genesis of my association with the Friends of Coburg Cemetery (FoCC) and its very hard working group of volunteers. Since then I have attended various FoCC led cemetery tours and events and been the recipient of their helpful advice. It is an absolutely absorbing cemetery full of many and varied resting inhabitants with fascinating life stories.

In my view, cemeteries such as Coburg need not be viewed as gloomy places with nothing to offer the living. Coburg Cemetery through its known and unknown inhabitants and the wonderful work of the FoCC, provides not only a picturesque culture but an alternative source of historical, social, economic, architectural, artistic history and knowledge, including of trends and fashions over time.

Like many other cemeteries in Australia and around the world, a visit to Coburg Cemetery tells us something not only about famous or infamous people but also about ordinary people. It also provides us with insights into the rich local social history of Coburg as well as greater Melbourne. To only seek out the resting places of the rich and famous because one might think they matter more than ordinary folk is folly, because doing so means one misses out on so much more. The inscriptions on the graves of ordinary people are just as enlightening as those of the more famous. Supported by FoCC, Coburg Cemetery is evidence of this very point. This is another reason why I became and remain a member.

Allan Barden, FoCC Member

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

Graveside Gardening

Rosemary growing on graves is pretty, evergreen and symbolic. "There's rosemary, that's for remembrance." said Ophelia in Hamlet.

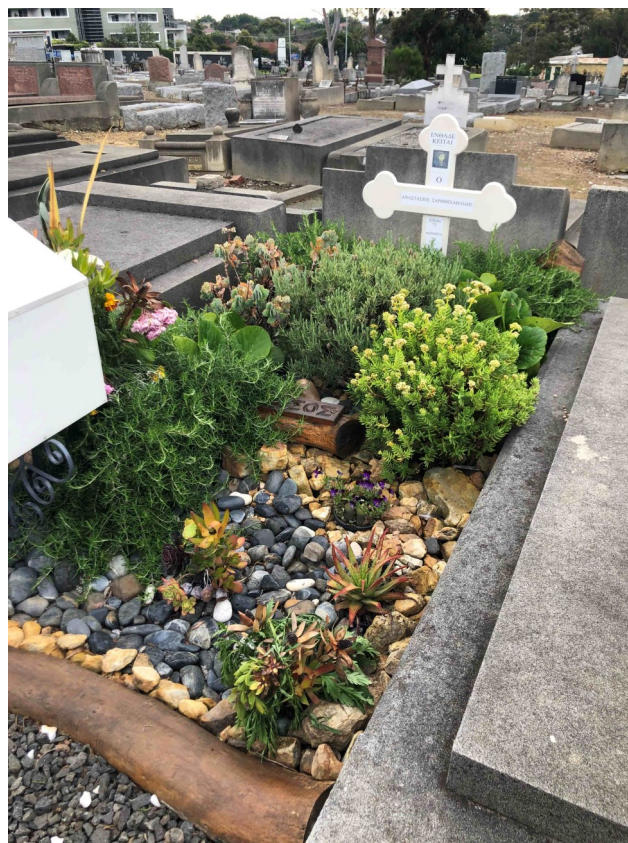
After finding unmarked graves at Coburg connected to my family, I struck some twigs and coaxed them to grow.

"The rabbits will eat them!" "You'll have to water them in summer!". I did it anyway.

Looking across the horizon of Coburg Cemetery I see a landscape of dry gravel and stone graves. There are a few trees, some shrubs, many are growing where they probably shouldn't. And yes, there are rabbits. Dozens of them. And yet... my little rosemary twigs are growing.

Inspired by some lush and pretty gardens on graves at Coburg, I'm now planning to strike some lavender!

Julie Stratford, FoCC Committee Member



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