

A Word From the President

Hello Everyone,

It's hard to believe we're almost halfway through the year! It's been a successful first half of the year, which you'll be able to read about throughout this edition.

Now that wintry weather is here, we will be a little less active and keeping warm, as we hope you will be too. Be prepared for another tour when spring arrives.

As many of you will have seen, we sadly lost founding and committee member Yvonne Kernan in December 2025. Her presence is definitely missed, and we remain grateful for everything she contributed to the Friends of Coburg Cemetery over the years.

Membership renewals will be due from July 1, so please keep an eye out for renewal reminders where applicable.

As always, I must thank you all for your ongoing support of the group. Whether you attend tours, assist with research, volunteer your time, or simply follow along with our work, your support helps us continue preserving and sharing the history of Coburg Cemetery.

Even during the quieter winter months, there is always research happening behind the scenes, with new stories and projects already being planned for the second half of the year. We look forward to sharing more with you soon.

Stay warm and take care,

Kelly Morgan, President, Friends of Coburg Cemetery Inc.

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Vale Yvonne Kernan

Members of FoCC were deeply saddened by the passing of a founding member and committee colleague, Yvonne Kernan, on 26 December 2025.

Yvonne was one of those remarkable people whose contribution to community life reached far beyond any one organisation. Her memorial service reflected the many strings to her bow, revealing a life rich in service, leadership, friendship and community involvement, recognised through a community service award and the deep respect of so many people.

For the Friends of Coburg Cemetery, Yvonne brought warmth, wisdom and generosity. She gave freely of her time, shared ideas with humility, and supported the group with genuine care and enthusiasm from its earliest days. Yvonne's contribution to our group and to the wider community leaves a lasting legacy. She will be remembered with great affection and gratitude, and greatly missed by all who knew her.

Our sincere condolences to Yvonne's family and many friends.



Fred Kruger: The Photographer Who Captured History

Among the thousands buried at Coburg Cemetery lies Johan Friedrich Carl Kruger, better known as Fred Kruger, a German-born photographer whose work helped preserve an important part of Victoria's Aboriginal history.

Born in Berlin in 1831, Kruger trained as an upholsterer before migrating to Victoria to join his brother's furniture business in Rutherglen. But as Victoria changed rapidly during the gold rush years, Kruger became fascinated by the emerging art of photography.

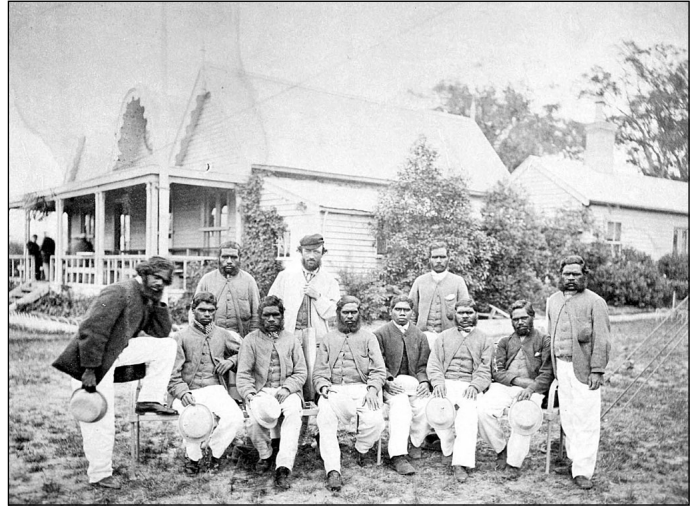
What began as experimentation soon became a profession.

By the 1860s, Kruger had established photographic studios in Carlton, Prahran, Preston and Geelong, travelling widely across Victoria capturing landscapes, townships and the changing face of colonial life. His panoramic photographs became highly regarded, winning medals at international exhibitions in Vienna in 1872 and Philadelphia in 1876.

Yet it is not his landscapes that are most remembered today.

Kruger's most significant work may be his photographs of Aboriginal residents at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station. His portraits now provide an invaluable visual record of life at one of Victoria's most important Aboriginal settlements.

Among his best-known images is his photograph of



Fred Kruger, *Aboriginal cricketers at Coranderrk, c.1877.*
Image courtesy of the National Gallery of Victoria

Aboriginal cricketers at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, an image that has become an important part of Australia's sporting and cultural history. Commissioned by the Victorian Board for the Protection of Aborigines to document life at Coranderrk, Kruger appears to have done more than simply record what he saw. His portraits suggest trust between photographer and subject and now provide historians with an important visual record of the Coranderrk community at a time when their land and way of life were under increasing pressure.

Fred Kruger died in 1888, aged 57, and was buried at Coburg Cemetery the following day.

His grave is a reminder that among those buried at Coburg are people whose work shaped Victoria's cultural and social history in lasting ways.

Fred Kruger's story has featured in past Friends of Coburg Cemetery heritage tours.

Thanks to FoCC member Jan Penney for her research into Kruger and his work.

To explore more of Fred Kruger's remarkable photographs, visit the National Gallery of Victoria's online collection at <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/collection/artist/2284/>



Fred Kruger, *Queen Mary and King Billy and original mia-mia, c.1866–1887.*

Image courtesy of the National Gallery of Victoria

Tombstone Tourist

My interest in cemeteries and the stories behind their headstones began as a boy, accompanying my grandmother as she laid flowers on my great-grandmother's grave.

Since then, in Australia and overseas, I have discovered that cemeteries offer a different kind of historical and cultural experience from the usual tourist attractions such as museums, galleries and cathedrals. They tell stories, not only of the famous and infamous, but of ordinary people whose lives shaped the communities around them.

Walking the heritage trails of Coburg Cemetery has shown me that local cemeteries are rich with stories of struggle, achievement, tragedy and resilience. Every headstone, whether grand or modest, offers a glimpse into the lives and times of those who came before us.

This fascination has taken me to some of the world's great cemeteries. At Père-Lachaise in Paris, among the graves of Edith Piaf, Marcel Proust and Oscar Wilde, the winding paths and monuments tell a broader story of French social and political history. In London's Highgate Cemetery, where Karl Marx lies buried beneath one of the cemetery's most visited memorials, the overgrown paths and hillside crypts evoke a powerful sense of the past.



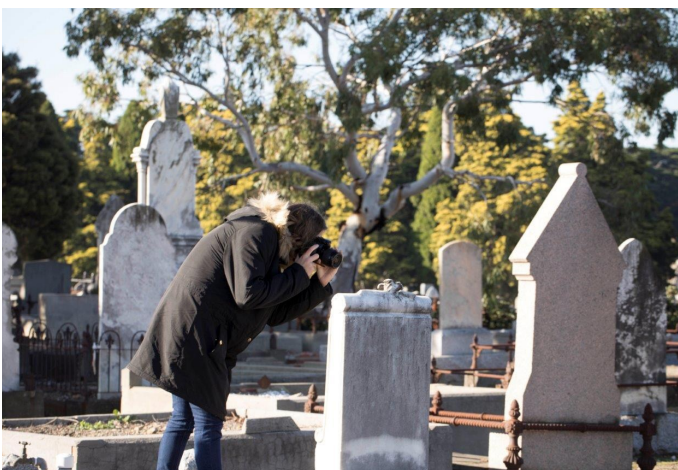
War cemeteries such as Bomana in Papua New Guinea, Kanchanaburi in Thailand and the Western Front cemeteries of Belgium and France leave a different impression. Their ordered rows and quiet beauty stand in stark contrast to the violence and suffering they commemorate.

In Dublin's Glasnevin Cemetery, the graves of political leaders and revolutionaries trace the story of Ireland itself. Yet it is often the lesser-known graves that hold the most intriguing stories, reminding us that history belongs to everyone, not just the celebrated few.

My experience has taught me that cemeteries are not gloomy places. They are places of memory, history and reflection. Through their monuments, inscriptions and the stories of those buried there, they preserve an important record of our social, architectural and cultural past.

Coburg Cemetery is no exception. Its stories are all around us, waiting to be discovered.

By 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

In the Footsteps of Unfortunates and Ghosts Past

A recent weekend spent at the former Pentridge Gaol provided an opportunity to explore two places rich in Melbourne's darker history: Pentridge itself and nearby Coburg Cemetery.

The weekend began with *A Tour of Unfortunate Events*, an evening walking tour presented by the Friends of Coburg Cemetery.

For those unfamiliar with the Friends of Coburg Cemetery (FoCC), the volunteer group has for many years researched, preserved and shared the stories of the cemetery and those buried there. Through themed tours, research projects and their newsletter *Buried Treasures*, they continue to uncover and preserve important local history.

The evening tour focused on people whose lives ended in sudden tragedy, accidents and cruel twists of fate.

Among those remembered were Ada and Gwyneth Evans, mother and daughter killed in the Boronia railway disaster; Arthur Evans, an electrician crushed by a collapsing wall; Rowland Sutton, a railway guard killed in a runaway train collision; Joseph Charles Lacey, electrocuted while working at the West Melbourne Gasworks; William Murray, lost in the sinking of the SS

Dandenong; and Friend Holness, the first Melbourne firefighter killed on duty.

Each grave revealed a story that transformed an ordinary headstone into a powerful reminder of lives interrupted by misfortune. The quality of the research and storytelling by FoCC made the tour both informative and deeply moving.

The following day, visiting Pentridge Gaol added another layer to the experience. Walking through the bluestone walls and harsh cells of H Division, hearing stories of punishment, isolation and execution, reinforced how places connected with death and suffering can also become important places of historical memory.

Together, Coburg Cemetery and Pentridge tell different parts of Melbourne's past, reminding us that history is not only found in books and museums, but in the places where people lived, suffered and are remembered.

Both places are well worth visiting, and FoCC's tours are a wonderful way to discover the stories hidden in plain sight.

*By Allan Barden, FoCC member
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www.footyalmanac.com.au*

A Tour of Unfortunate Events – A Resounding Success

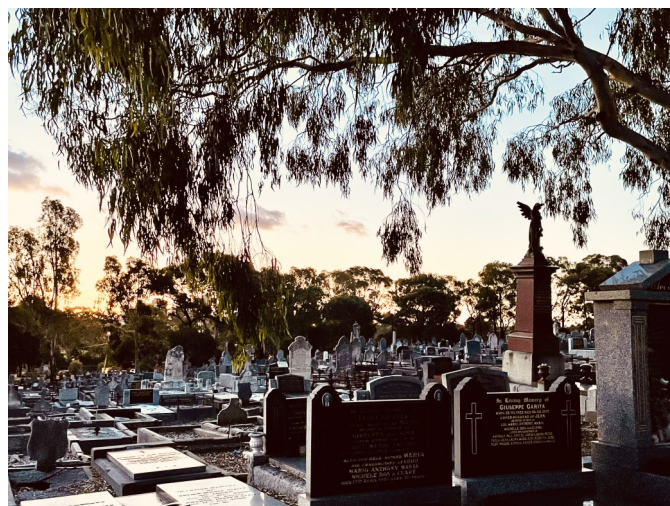
Our recent evening tours in March and April proved to be some of our most successful events to date. Despite less-than-ideal weather and an unexpected logistical hiccup when the security gates were locked earlier than planned, both evenings went ahead smoothly thanks to some quick problem-solving behind the scenes.

Each tour attracted around 35 people, creating a lively and engaged group atmosphere. It was really pleasing to see the same interest in the repeat tour that we ran on 10 April.

We also took the opportunity to trial a couple of new presenters, who brought fresh energy and enthusiasm to the storytelling. Their contribution added a new dimension to the tours and was very well received by attendees.

Both events were a roaring success! FoCC members, especially those involved in running these tours, are delighted with this support and interest from the

community. We look forward to building on this and running lots more fun and interesting tours over the coming years.



Wong Mow: Vegetable Vendor and Unlicensed Dentist

Among the many unexpected stories found in Coburg Cemetery is that of Wong Mow, a Melbourne businessman whose working life crossed two very different trades: fruiterer and unlicensed dentist.

Born around 1853, probably in Hong Kong, Wong Mow was part of Melbourne's long-established Chinese community and lived much of his working life in and around Little Bourke Street, the centre of Chinese Melbourne in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



By day, Wong Mow traded in bananas and Chinese goods from premises at 134 Little Bourke Street. Like many Chinese migrants of the period, he was involved in small business and supported both his family and the wider community through trade.

But Wong Mow had another skill.

He claimed to have learned dentistry in Hong Kong from an American dentist and, for some years, practised part-time as a dentist in Tattersall's Lane in Melbourne's CBD, mainly serving members of the Chinese community, though he also treated European patients.

In November 1918, his dental practice came to the attention of the Victorian Dental Board. Under the Medical Act of 1915, Wong Mow was charged with practising dentistry without a licence. He did not deny it.

In court, members of the Dental Board admitted that his equipment was excellent, reportedly superior to that of some Collins Street dentists. But there was one serious problem: he was unregistered and lacked sterilising equipment, an increasing expectation in modern dental practice. He was fined £15, plus costs.

Tragically, Wong Mow died three days after the Dental Board inspection, in November 1918, aged about 65.

He left behind his wife, Pon Heae, and five children, all born in Melbourne, a reminder that by the turn of the century Chinese families were already firmly part of the fabric of city life.

His funeral departed from Little Bourke Street and made its way to Coburg Cemetery, where he was buried in the Church of England section rather than the Chinese denominational area, suggesting his family had embraced Christian worship, as some Chinese Australians of his generation had done.

Wong Mow's story is a reminder that the history of Coburg Cemetery includes the lives of migrants who built businesses, supported communities and, in Wong Mow's case, quietly filled important needs, even if outside the law.

Thanks to Jan Penney for her research into Chinese families and individuals buried at Coburg Cemetery



AI-generated illustration depicting the Melbourne Chinatown area of Little Bourke Street in the 1880s, created 2026

Alice's Story: A Love Rekindled

Alice was one of the many quiet lives connected to Coburg Cemetery, a woman whose story was shaped by grief, loss, struggle and loneliness and, eventually, happiness. Her name was Alice and this is her story.

It was at the Brunswick Church of Christ that Alice met Fred, where many lifelong friendships and partnerships began. It was a time when families were a close-knit community. Both Alice and Fred loved music, sang in the choir, and joined the church youth group. In later years, Alice became the church organist and served faithfully for decades.

Alice was a true city girl, working as a typist in Melbourne, while Fred dreamed of life on the land. When their friendship turned to romance, Alice's mother disapproved and told Fred he was too old for her girl. So for Alice and Fred, at just 17 and 23, any idea of romance was squashed.

Fred went on to become a sheep farmer. He married and had a daughter. For Alice, life took a different turn. Her family suffered a devastating loss when her brother Albert died at just 19. Two years later, her father died aged only 44, leaving Alice, then 23, to support her grieving mother and help care for her younger brother Victor.

With family responsibilities taking priority, Alice remained at home, working full-time while becoming her mother's companion and later her carer. Years passed, and Alice's own life remained on hold.

1955 was the year that it all changed!

Her mother Jessie died at 72, freeing Alice to live her own life. One day, she was called to the manager's office at work to meet a visitor. It was Fred. His wife had died, and while in Melbourne settling family matters, he had decided to look up Alice, his first love. The old flame was relit!

At 54, Alice made the biggest decision of her life: to leave behind her job, home, friends and family to live on a farm in the middle of a flat, dry, dusty, hot, and uninteresting 400-acre paddock ... but married to Fred!

Fred was a good, kind, caring man who treated Alice like a queen. For the first time in her life she felt valued and loved. He changed her life completely. She learned to live and laugh and to become the person she was meant to be. Their years together were sadly brief. Eight years



later, Fred died suddenly of a heart attack one hot day while helping a neighbour on the farm.

They were hard, happy and wonderful years when a sad, lonely woman became a contented, fulfilled happy woman all because her Knight in Shining Armour finally found "his Alice."

The farm was eventually sold, and Alice returned to live closer to the friends who had become her support network and who helped her celebrate a life well-lived.

Alice Jessie Jenkins (née Adams) died in Melbourne in March 1984, aged 80. She is commemorated in the Niche Wall while her parents, Arthur and Jessie, and her brother Arthur are also buried at Coburg Cemetery.

By Pearl Adams, FoCC committee member, niece of Alice Adams and daughter of Victor Adams

170 Years of Coburg Cemetery... Sort Of

This year marks around 170 years since the earliest proposed beginnings of Coburg Cemetery, but pinning down an exact founding date is not as straightforward as it might seem.

For many years, 1856 has often been cited as the cemetery's founding year. But recent research by Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust suggests the documentary trail is more complicated.

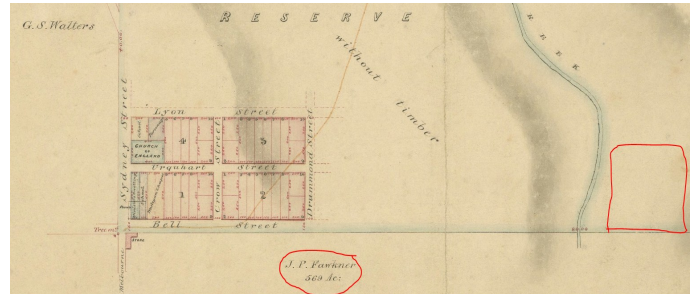
The first formal government gazette appointing trustees for what was then known as the General Cemetery at Pentridge appeared on 5 April 1860, making 1860 the earliest clearly documented official beginning of the cemetery.

Yet the land itself had a history long before that.

Long before surveyors marked out allotments or trustees were appointed, this ridge above Merri Creek formed part of the traditional Country of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people, part of the Kulin Nation. The higher ground and nearby waterway formed part of a well-used landscape for travel, food gathering and community life for countless generations.

An 1849 survey map of the Pentridge district shows the land that would later become the cemetery still marked as Crown land, east of the early township. At that stage, no cemetery had yet been established on the site.

The earliest confirmed burial at Coburg Cemetery is infant Lelia Jane Wilson, who died on 15 May 1864,



Survey map of Pentridge (now Coburg), 1849, showing Bell Street before the establishment of Coburg Cemetery.

followed shortly after by William Spry in June that year. Their memorials remain among the oldest known in the cemetery. This information was provided by GMCT's records management team in April 2026. Earlier reports listed Margaret Sullivan, who died in 1875, as the earliest burial, but it now appears hers was simply the earliest burial record. Lelia Wilson's burial is recorded in both a newspaper notice and on her father's gravestone. The search for the cemetery's true beginnings is complicated by nineteenth-century records that refer simply to burials at "Pentridge", which may mean the township, the public cemetery or the prison grounds. Prison burials, including those of Ned Kelly, took place within the prison reserve and were later exhumed.

So when exactly was Coburg Cemetery founded? The answer may depend on what we mean by "founded".

Was it when the land was first identified for burial, when trustees were formally appointed, or when the first known burials took place?

Whatever date is chosen, Coburg Cemetery has preserved the stories of the district and its people for more than 160 years. Whether we count its beginnings from the 1850s, the official gazettal in 1860, or the earliest confirmed burials in 1864, its history remains an important part of Coburg's story.

To explore more of Coburg Cemetery's early history, including the story of William Spry and a collection of historical maps tracing the cemetery's development, visit the Friends of Coburg Cemetery website www.friendsofcoburgcemetery.com



By 1870, the cemetery reserve had been formally set aside beside Bell Street, while much of the surrounding land remained only lightly subdivided.

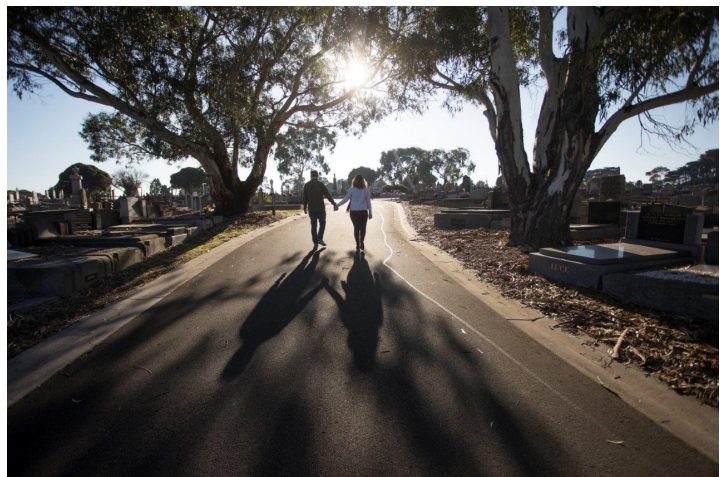
Upcoming Events

As the winter chill sneaks under our front doors and Melbourne weather turns us all into Netflix enthusiasts, the Friends of Coburg Cemetery will be taking a seasonal pause from tours and outdoor events. We look forward to welcoming you back in spring.

We have plans for a couple more events in 2026: at least one more (but different) tour, and, if we can pull it together, an onsite photography class. Nothing is sorted yet, but stay tuned.

There are several ways to find out about future events and activities:

- **Become a member!** It's only \$20 a year (\$10 for unwaged) and you get newsletters, updates and are invited to participate in all our activities. We encourage members to initiate and organise events, too. You can find the membership application on friendsofcoburgcemetery.com
- **Facebook.** With over 700 followers of the Friends of Coburg Cemetery Facebook page, we make sure we notify people of events and activities, as well as interesting stories and tidbits in between.
- **Mailing List.** Email us on focc.group@gmail.com and ask to be put on the mailing list. This ensures you will be contacted next time we are running public events.
- **Website.** Check out the events page on friendsofcoburgcemetery.com to find out when the next tour is advertised. Our webpage is constantly updated with events and the latest newsletter.



Friends of Coburg Cemetery Inc.

Committee: Kelly Morgan (President), Julie-Ann Morgan (Treasurer),
Pearl Adams, June Salter, Julie Stratford

Newsletter: Julie Stratford

Contact us: focc.group@gmail.com

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