

All tours and activities cancelled until further notice

With the rising severity of the Covid-19 crisis and Government restrictions regarding non-essential group gatherings, FOCC must cancel most of our planned activities for 2020 until further notice.

We will reschedule tours and events as soon as we can.

Only the “virtual tour” will still happen. We are collaborating with Coburg Library to offer this presentation online. Stay in touch via email or Facebook to find out more about this event.

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Remarkable Women Tour an outstanding success!

It was a beautiful March afternoon and more than 30 people joined us to take our newly revamped Remarkable Women Tour.

We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves and the participants did, too.



Emily Skinner, goldfields pioneer and journal writer.

There were old favourites among our selection – Emily Skinner, pioneer, miner’s wife and journal writer; Anna Brennan, lawyer and equal rights advocate; Annie and Maggie Tucker, victims of the 1908 Sunshine railway disaster.

We also met some new women – Catherine Deen, an Irish woman married to a Punjabi

hawker; Agnes and Susan Walwyn, pioneers of the Newlands area; Caroline and Minnie Scarfe, socialists, social justice campaigners, political activists and Labor party stalwarts; Jessie Atyeo, a WW2 veteran; and Ina Maud Watson, ornithologist, children’s author, radiologist and educator.

Thanks to the presenters Cheryl, Diane, Julie and Lee and to Yvonne who made sure the refreshments were ready on our return.



Thanks, too, to those who came and joined us. But most of all thanks to the remarkable women without whom this tour would not have been possible.

We’ve included some photos from the tour scattered throughout this newsletter. They come to you courtesy of Yvonne Kernan and Katrin Strohl. Thanks goes to them, too.



A Civil War Veteran buried at Coburg Cemetery

Not many people know that there are several veterans of the US Civil War buried at Coburg Cemetery. This article tells the story of one of them. We aim to include the stories of others in future issues of Buried Treasures.

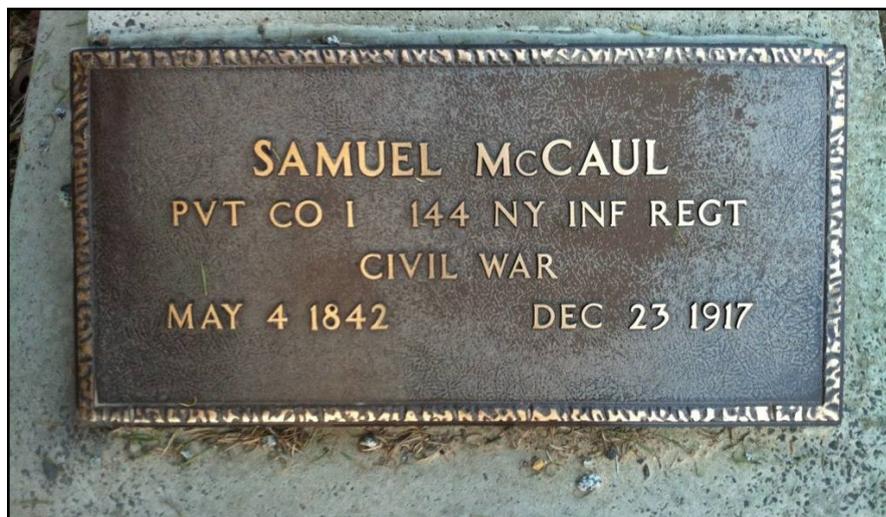
Private Samuel McCaul was 78 years old and living at the Hospital for the Insane in Kew when he passed away on 23 December 1917.

According to the memorial on his grave, he was born on 4 May 1842 either in Scotland, as recorded on his death certificate, or in Newry, Co. Down, Ireland.

At 18, Samuel sailed to the United States of America on 20 June 1860, arriving on the ship *Wyoming* at Philadelphia. Immigration records list him as a labourer.

At the time of his enlistment in the US Army on 14 August 1862, Samuel was labouring, living in Davenport, Delaware. He served for three years as a private in Company I, 144 New York Infantry Regiment and after the war he returned briefly to Ireland and then sailed to Australia.

As Samuel died in a mental institution, Victorian law dictated there be an inquest into his death. Three days after he died the State Coroner determined that Samuel had died from cystitis, (an inflammation of the bladder) and pyelonephritis (infection of the kidney). His death certificate notes that a police constable was assisting the coroner and certified the findings.



Samuel was unmarried and the names and details of his parents were not recorded. The certificate also notes that it was not known how long he had been in Victoria.

When Samuel applied for a war pension (\$30 US a month) from the United States Government in 1904, his address was given as the Melbourne Benevolent Society, Carlton. In 1915 he was committed to the Asylum for the Insane, Kew.

It is very possible that he wasn't "insane" by modern definitions, but perhaps was experiencing senility or PTSD or maybe was just a sick older man with no family to care for him.

Samuel was buried in the Presbyterian Section of the cemetery, alone in a

grave that had been purchased by a James McIntosh. Interestingly the burial records give his age as 65, whereas his death certificate records that he was 78 years old.

The American Veterans Administration, Washington DC, USA placed the bronze memorial plaque on his grave that is pictured here.

Samuel is one of three Civil War Veterans buried in Coburg Cemetery. We aim to bring you more information about the other two, James Abner Sherman (1845-1916) and Adoniram (Adonoram?) Judson Ramsdell (1842-1916) in future editions.

Story by David Weatherill

Editor's note: If you are interested in learning more about Samuel McCaul's war

More from the Remarkable Women tour



Left: It was a very warm day, as you can see by the outfits. **Middle:** Seeking shade at the rotunda. **Right:** Diane speaking at the grave of Anna Brennan.

Stories behind the headstones: how an historian researched unclaimed gravestones

The re-installation of about 300 headstones removed from graves at Coburg Cemetery in the mid-1980s is now underway and over 60 headstones are already in place. Each rests securely on a specifically made concrete base, designed and developed to support the old headstone. Headstones have been cleaned first, but not repaired, in accordance with conservation policy. The remainder will be replaced throughout 2020.

Although GMCT endeavored to contact the families of these people, few came forward. This puzzled me so I decided to make a conscious effort to find out as much as I could about the people who lie in these graves. Many had left no direct descendants but some extended families do exist and can be located. They may even wish to visit at some stage.

Using the name list GMCT compiled of the first 60 headstones as a start I found that all 60 had an interesting story to tell. I began with the information available on the GMCT Deceased Search website, which listed the full name, date of burial, and showed any other burials in the same grave.

Using a combination of BDM records, Trove, war and census records, wills and probates, Ancestry.com.au and other records available on the Internet I could gradually piece together their backgrounds and find their stories. Some people, like Arthur Franzi, killed in a motorcycle accident in 1927, received a great deal of newspaper attention and a Trove search by name quickly found much information. Others were early settlers so had obituaries written. Some had been involved in a reported incident or died suddenly which required a coroner's report.

Others, such as the Evers and Crook family, who lie buried together, have proved more difficult as it seems the families intermarried over time so the actual relationship is more difficult to determine. More research is required there. Determining a person's occupation sometimes helped and led to other interesting facts. Alice May Warsaw, who died in 1916 aged 23, was a tailoress and her father, Louis advertised himself as a superior Russian tailor and professional cutter. He was actually Polish and, in his early life, was declared insolvent several times, all reported in the press.

I hope to be able to supply these stories to family members, if they are interested, and to the public as a way of demonstrating that every life has a story to tell and that no one is ever forgotten.

Story by Dr Jan Penney, Historian and member of the Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust



Walter Richard Ah Chinn (1881-1931)

Born of a Cantonese father and an Anglo mother on the Ballarat goldfields in the late 1800s, life for Wally Ah Chinn was never going to be easy. It hadn't been easy for his mother, either.

Wally's mother, Jessie Mullens, was one of the many young girls on the goldfields deserted by her parents and left to fend for herself or be institutionalised. In 1868, at 11 years old, Jessie was charged with being disorderly on the streets of Ballarat and sentenced to four years in a reformatory. The State demanded her father pay her keep.

Things didn't get any better and by 15 Jessie was reported by a police officer to be living in a brothel in the Chinese Camp.

Three years later, still very young but having experienced a lot more of life than most of today's 18 year olds, Jessie married 40 year old Chin Ah Chinn, one of the many Cantonese men who had come to the Victorian goldfields to make his fortune in the mid-1800s. Only nine years later, when Jessie was pregnant with her seventh child, Ah Chinn died, found by a local police officer lying on the Main Road of Smythesdale. Reports of his death described him as a 'Celestial from the Flowery Land'.

Raising her seven children amidst poverty and racism, Jessie ensured her children remained connected to their

Chinese heritage. Shipping records show that Wally travelled to Hong Kong at least twice, possibly to visit his father's family.

Occupations open to part-Chinese men at the turn of the 20th Century were limited. Wally took up French polishing and found work with Quoon Lee and Company in Lonsdale Street, Melbourne.

Wally was working there in 1908 when the owner was charged under the Furniture Wages Board for not paying the full union rate to his workers. There was a strong move at the time to exclude Chinese furniture manufacturers and their work had to be stamped as "Made by Chinese labour" in an attempt to limit competition.

In 1909, Wally married an Australian girl of British descent, Catherine Roberts, or Dolly as she was known. Few Chinese women came to Australia and although it might not have been socially accepted by

all, men with Chinese heritage often married Australian women. Dolly's father was a furniture manufacturer in Collingwood so it's quite possible that Dolly and Walter met through his work. At least he had something in common with his father in law!

Dolly and Wally are now buried together at Coburg Cemetery. Wally died in 1931 in when he was 50 and although he had been living in Melbourne for some time, the death notices asked Ballarat papers to copy them, notifying his Ballarat relatives, both Chinese and Australian, and overseas family.

Story by Dr Jan Penney, Historian and GMCT



Furniture stamp.
Source: Melbourne
Heritage Action



Chinese Furniture Makers,
Source: The Australasian Sketcher, 24 April 1880

A Word from the President

And another year kicks off! This is our tenth year as Friends of Coburg Cemetery and we had another event-filled calendar planned. Covid-19 quickly put a stop to that! Luckily we enjoyed the 2020 version of the Remarkable Women tour on a sunny March afternoon filled with fascinating women and their stories. We stood beside graves, some decrepit and forgotten, and heard about political activists, writers, pioneers and one of the first female lawyers in Australia.

Only a few weeks later we realised that the rest of our planned activities had to be put on hold until... well... we don't really know! We had planned a next full moon tour, a virtual tour at a library, a crafty session taking impressions then a Halloween night time tour in October. The library tour will become an online presentation - stay tuned to our Facebook page or the Moreland Library website to find out more about that. Stay connected to find out about our other activities later in the year, hopefully when this virus isn't constantly threatening the fabric of our society!

We are slowly building more connections through Facebook and once we get the new website working properly you will all be able to see at a glance what's happening next at Coburg Cemetery. Stay tuned, stay home, stay safe and stay well. Julie

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Get involved!

We are a small group with some big ideas! If you'd like to get more involved we are looking for people for a variety of roles. In particular we need help with research, newsletters and our website. Contact us to find out more: focc.group@gmail.com