

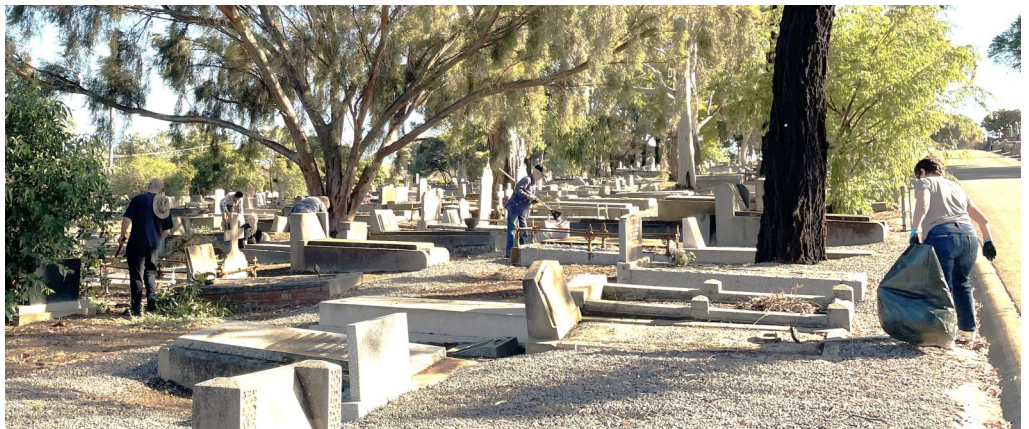
## St Patrick's Day Clean-Up



We had a beautiful sunny St Patrick's Day this year – perfect to do some Irish grave-cleaning!

A merry band of volunteers – some in festive green – armed with gloves, rakes, and buckets gathered around 9:30 AM on March 17 in Compartment RC-E, on the Elizabeth Street side. Over the next two hours a good portion of the section was tackled and de-weeded. Many gravestones had been obscured by fallen branches and leaves and other detritus both natural and artificial. Once they'd been brought into the sunlight again, we could spruce them up with a quick wash and clean.

It was a lovely opportunity to revisit or rediscover this area of the cemetery with each grave cleaned, both for new members and old. Their stories made for good swaps around Julie-Ann Morgan's picnic table full of snacks and hot drinks – a deserving reward for everyone's hard work!



## A Word from The President

Hello and welcome back!! It has been a great start to 2024, maybe it's been the milder summer that enticed us all to get out and about at the cemetery. There's been grave searches galore, membership numbers have risen AGAIN and we've been busy planning upcoming events and tours. It can't get much better.

We've already had two very successful days at the

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A great big thank you to June, Pearl, Phil, Kelly, Julie-Ann, Yvonne, Margaret, Julie, Di, Dee and Riya for taking time out of your Sunday morning to show some love to the cemetery. We hope to see more faces at the next one in cooler weather! Thanks also to Dee who found our event on Facebook and decided to lend the FoCC a helping hand and sharing her own fascinating family roots within Coburg Cemetery.

We will definitely be doing this again! Send us an email if you'd like to be notified of our next clean-up activity planned in May: [focc.group@gmail.com](mailto:focc.group@gmail.com)

(See page 6 for tips on cleaning gravestones and before and after photos of one of the graves we tidied.)

cemetery – 'Capture the Moment: Photography in the Cemetery', and the St Patrick's Day clean up. It was lovely to see everyone after our break over Christmas. It's also been a great opportunity to reconnect with some returning members we haven't seen in a while.

We have so many exciting things happening in the next few months, so keep an eye out for our emails.

Looking forward to seeing you all around!

Kelly Morgan

## Members' Stories - How We Became Involved

### Colleen and Gerry

Gerry and I initially became involved at Coburg through researching my great grandparents, Elizabeth Annie and Frederick Rouse Bayliss. Frederick served as Shire President of Preston twice, 1889-90 and 1894-95.

On these visits to the cemetery, we noticed a flyer about FoCC and decided to join the group, and we have not looked back since.

We became members and have been for some time now, all of which has been most enjoyable.



Firstly, we started attending the tours. The tours are events not to be missed. Aside from being enjoyable, there is some great history and stories to learn from the residents of the cemetery.

From there we got a little more involved helping set up for events, giving a small talk along the way, even to the point where a small section of grass was labelled 'Gerry's Office' where he took on the role of welcoming and taking the small fee for the events!

We look forward to more great times with Kelly now at the helm and the members of the group.

*Colleen and Gerry Burns, FoCC Members and Tour Helpers*

### Julie

Reflecting on my journey with FoCC, I can't help but feel grateful for the path that led me here. From childhood curiosity sparked by shows like *The Sullivans* to the bustling streets of Melbourne, my fascination with the past has been constant. I recently thanked my old high

school history teacher for igniting that spark that guided me into studying history at uni.

It wasn't until I settled in the northern 'burbs and planted my roots that I started to explore the stories hidden within the streets and homes around me. Joining historical societies seemed like a natural step, but it was a tour in 2011 of Coburg Cemetery that truly fired me up.

As a small group of us formed a 'Friends group' and I found myself umm-ing and ahh-ing my way into the role of President, I quickly realised that the job wasn't as 'hands-off' as I had hoped! Yet, despite the challenges, the journey has been incredibly rewarding. Organising tours, coordinating activities, researching stories and responding to genealogy and curious enquiries, we FoCCers tackled problems, lobbied for support, and laughed a lot, sometimes over a few glasses of red.

Our newsletter and revamped website show our commitment to engaging with the community and preserving our rich history, and are a great way for us to share our discoveries with the world.



Now, as I take a step back from my "presidential duties", I'm happy to just do the more relaxing stuff, like researching stories, wandering around taking photos, planting rosemary cuttings, and soaking in the evening light at the cemetery.

As I hand over the reins to Kelly, I am grateful for the friendships forged and the stories shared. Together, we've uncovered the tales of those who came before us, ensuring that a little bit of our history lives on for generations to come.

*Julie Stratford, FoCC Member and Ex-President*

### 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](mailto:focc.group@gmail.com)



## Members' Stories - How We Became Involved (continued...)

### Steve

Back in 2020 when COVID-19 hit I contracted a pretty bad case. Given how new it was at this stage, nobody knew much about it and I was quarantined for 14 days. I was actually sicker than that and ended up house bound for about 6 weeks. Because I couldn't go out I decided to start researching my family history. I knew nothing of my family past my grandparents, and all my older relatives had passed on.

This is when I started going through Ancestry.com, and relatives popped up all over the place. One relative in particular caught my attention, and that was my great-grandfather Albert Walter Henry Augustus Birmingham Murray. He passed away in 1944 so I never knew him. He is buried at Coburg along with his wife and other relatives. All up there are about 15 relatives that I know of buried at Coburg. So I sent an email off to FoCC asking if they could take a photo of my great-grandfather's grave. They came back to me with a photo of the location and it was unmarked.

I decided after lockdown had finished to visit his grave and was surprised to see that it had been marked with a

Commonwealth war grave since the photo was taken. I had not long retired from work and was still up in the air as to what I was going to do with my time.

While I was at my great-grandfather's grave I decided to go for a walk and look around. That was it! I fell in love with the Coburg Cemetery. I am now a confirmed taphophile and spend a lot of time with my mate Steve visiting older pioneer cemeteries.

I could not believe the history attached to Coburg Cemetery. There is everything from politicians, sporting greats, victims of disasters and a vast number of diggers from the Great War.

I've spent many hours at Coburg and only seen a small portion of it.  
*Steve Pritchard, FoCC Member*



## Take a Walk Along the Graveside...

Every so often when we take a walk around the cemetery, we come across something new: a name that catches our attention or a grave we didn't know was there previously. It's hard to keep track of every soul in such a vast space – and that's where you, our members come in! Come join us on one of our recent story walks, with a fascinating new character at each little pause, waiting to be heard as you take a breather.

### Edith isn't dead yet!

One resident of Coburg Cemetery, a Miss Edith Stribling, arrived there in quite extraordinary circumstances in July 1939. According to the Hurstbridge edition of the *Advertiser*, Miss Stribling was a pensioner who had been living with a South Morang couple for 14 years, when on July 11 she suddenly fell ill. Constable Ellis from Epping arranged for a policewoman to take her to the Cheltenham Homes, possibly to recuperate, but the next day he was informed that she had died. When an undertaker came up to retrieve the body, he discovered to his shock that she had in fact fallen into a deep coma and wasn't dead at all!

The policewoman was summoned again to take her to the Royal Melbourne Hospital, but sadly she finally succumbed to her coma the day after. Had the confusion and delay not occurred, there may have been a possibility of her living longer, but as it was, she was buried in Coburg Cemetery at the age of 67. She had no known descendants in the Melbourne area, with her only relative being her brother Edward Stribling, a stock and station agent in Euroa.

**SOUTH MORANG**  
**COMA MISTAKEN FOR DEATH**  
Miss Edith Stribling, an old age pensioner, died last week aged 67 years. Miss Stribling, who had lived with Mr. and Mrs. Turpenny at South Morang for the last 14 years, became very ill on July 11, and First Constable Ellis of Epping was informed, and arranged for Policewoman Hansen to take Miss Stribling next day to the Cheltenham Homes. However, next morning, Constable Ellis received a telephone message to say

that the woman was dead. The authorities in Melbourne were informed, and an undertaker came up to remove the body. To his surprise he found on arrival that she was still alive, a state of deep coma into which she had fallen having been mistaken for death. Policewoman Hansen was again summoned and Miss Stribling was taken to the Royal Melbourne Hospital, where she died the next day. Miss Stribling had no relatives in the district, but had a brother, Mr. Edward Stribling, stock and station agent, of Euroa. She was buried in the Coburg cemetery.

## Take a Walk Along the Graveside (continued...)

### Richard Gill, Labor Stalwart

Born at Emerald Hill (South Melbourne) to Irish parents, Richard Henry 'Dick' Gill would go on to be involved in a long list of unions, committees, and associations. In 1901 while employed at Barrett Brothers malthouse in South Melbourne, the Maltster's Society named him as one of their three nominees to the first-ever Malt Wages Board of Melbourne. The following year he would become vice-president and then president of the Brewery and Maltsters' Employees Association.

He was described as a 'hardworking maltster' and was a staunch spokesman for workers in the liquor industry. In 1904 he founded the Liquor Trades Union, Melbourne, and remained its full-time secretary till the end of his life. He established it as a federal union in 1908, received his first award as federal secretary in 1911, and expanded the union into allied trades in 1912. Between 1910 and 1920, he helped the union establish many rural branches.

He was a prominent member of the Eight Hour Committee, becoming its vice-president in 1916, president in 1917, and the secretary of its sports committee. He seems to have taken his sports enthusiasm to all his causes: he organised sports events for the Australian Natives Association and was a committee member of the League of Victorian Wheelmen. A surf bather, he was active in the movement to popularise

mixed bathing.

Richard was active in local government, as the Australian Labor Party member to Port Melbourne Municipal Council in 1910. He would go on to be its mayor in 1911-12 and 1918-19. He was an active member of the Port Melbourne Political Labor

Council and its various committees, and organiser of its state conference. He was also a staunch anti-conscriptionist during the First World War.

Richard's obituary describes him as a stalwart of the Labor Party, but he clearly had his fingers in several pies when it came to worker's rights. A toast to his efforts!



### Poor Little Stanley Morris

Here's a snippet of the conversation at a recent tour as we approached an old grave near the road in the CoFE B section of Coburg Cemetery...

*Margaret: Wow, have a look at the tile work over there. Isn't that interesting!*

*Kelly: Well, it's funny you say that, because that's our next stop.*

We were all instantly drawn to the beauty of the tile work and the good condition it was in, considering it is around 100 years old. Secondly, our attention was drawn to the name STANLEY.

When Kelly first found this grave about a year ago, she, like many before her, thought it referred to the STANLEY family and speculated who they were. Eventually, her investigation led to some heartbreaking answers.

In April 1914 Stanley Morris was a curious toddler, two months shy of his third birthday. He was in the kitchen with his mother who was occupied with cleaning pots and pans. Stanley climbed onto a chair, perhaps wanting to help his mum, but unfortunately, he reached for a pot of hot water mixed with caustic soda. Despite immediate

efforts, Stanley died the following day from his burns.

Little Stanley rests in compartment CoE-B with his mother's sister and parents. His parents moved from Brunswick to New South Wales in 1924, 10 years after Stanley's death, and did not have any other children.





## Take a Walk Along the Graveside (continued...)

### The MacDonald Family Grave

Another highlight at a recent cemetery tour was discovering William, Margaret, and Charlotte MacDonald, who appear to have been part of an incredibly renowned and well-respected family judging by their impressively sculpted shared grave. Based on the inscription on the gravestone you'd be forgiven for thinking William was the only successful member of the family!



However, it's a reflection of the times they lived in, when women's lives were reduced to being an accessory of their fathers or husbands. William's life story is detailed on the inscription, while his wife Margaret is only described as "wife of William, mother of Lottie and daughter of Thomas O'Brien, solicitor of Elizabeth St Melbourne".

The last line gives us a bit to dig our investigative teeth into. It seems Margaret was a bit of a real estate mogul, owning land and property everywhere between Preston and Albert Park. She was a woman of independent means but was only referred to as a 'married woman' or 'wife of William MacDonald' in land title records.

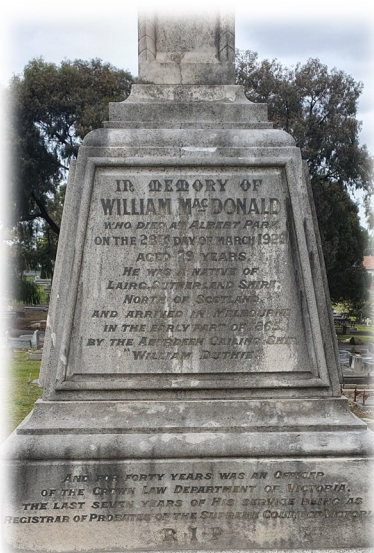
After Margaret passed, her husband inherited her land holdings. When William himself died in 1923, the portion of land he owned in Preston was sold off and subdivided to create two new streets: Saint Duthus Street (named after the house the MacDonalds lived in on Murray Road) and Margtmary Avenue running north to south between Cooper Street and Murray

Road. The name 'Margtmary' suggests a blend of the names Margaret and Mary, in memory of Margaret Mary MacDonald's ownership of the land. Coincidentally, there is a MacDonald Street running off the south side of Murray Road, opposite but not quite aligned with Margtmary Avenue.

Charlotte, or Lottie as she was fondly known, left her own legacy in the world. As a young girl, Charlotte was educated by the Sisters of Mercy in Nicholson Street, Fitzroy, a short walk from her then family home 'Loch Shin' at 239 Rathdowne Street, Carlton. Decades later, the school commemorated her name in the Lottie MacDonald Prize, to be awarded annually for proficiency in Christian doctrine and catechism. She later lived with her mother at 'Duart', the stately home that still stands at 121 Beaconsfield Parade, Albert Park. As the sole heir of her parents' estates, she sold off most of the properties she inherited, allowing her to live her remaining years wealthy.

Lottie died in May 1945. Her will was dated February 21, 1919, the same day as her father's, and they nominated each other as executors. As William had predeceased Charlotte, probate was granted to the National Trustees Executors & Agency Company of Australasia Limited. Charlotte's estate was valued at £53,509, 16 shillings and 11 pence, the bulk of which was investments. Duart was valued at £5805, and ownership was transferred to the Roman Catholic Trusts Corporation in December 1945. Since she left no direct descendants, her estate was divided equally among 10 charitable institutes of her choice, consisting of orphanages, hospitals, and convents.

Today she and her parents rests in the RC-B compartment at Coburg Cemetery, Grave #597. In addition to the beautiful statues, there are a few carved plaques presented in William's memory from his friends and coworkers. They had lain scattered around the grave until Julie and Kelly Morgan gathered and pieced them back together and are now back in their proper place for all to admire.





## Take a Walk Along the Graveside (continued...)



### John Lewis Meehan, loyal firefighter

On January 23, 1946, John Meehan (born 1876) was buried at Coburg Cemetery after passing away at the age of 67. He was a resident of Goodwin Street in Glen Iris and was a former Deputy Chief Fire Officer of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, having been a fireman with them for an astounding 42 years. His obituary in the *Advocate* cites him as leaving behind a widow and one daughter, and the morning mass was held at St Patrick's Cathedral before the funeral party moved to Coburg. Does anyone have any more information on him or members of his family?

## How To Clean a Gravestone

Cleaning a gravestone is not as simple as a quick fix with soap and water! The natural stone exposed to moisture and long-term changes in the weather make them susceptible to moss and lichen growth which can erode and break up the stone over time. Many older graves, especially Victorian and Edwardian era headstones like the ones you would find in Coburg Cemetery, have extra features like lead or burnished lettering adding to the level of difficulty.

Always check the stability of the gravestone before you decide to clean it. Ideal gravestone-cleaning weather is not too hot and not too cold, as it was at our recent grave-cleaning session. Extreme temperatures can cause further cracks in the stone when cleaning.

Give the gravestone a gentle wash down with water, either by hand or with a damp cloth, before tackling any pesky growth. Most dirt and grime can be loosened with a soft scrubbing brush or sponge; do not use abrasive scrubbers or apply too much pressure. For tough stains and natural growth, we recommend a non-ionic, non-acidic, bleach-free cleanser specifically formulated for moss and lichen (available at Bunnings) which won't erode the old stone further. Absolutely avoid harsh chemicals like soap, detergent, bleach, or vinegar.



*Before and after: the Harkson, Cooney and Hingston graves in Coburg Cemetery*



### Friends of Coburg Cemetery Inc.

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