

## A Word From the President

Hello FoCCers!

It's been a while since our last newsletter, so this edition will catch you up on everything that's been happening. We hope you're all enjoying the nicer weather that has arrived.

Since our last edition, we've been busy with events and projects. Most recently, our "Tour of Unfortunate Events" was a great success, it sold out within days, and we even had to turn people away! We've been asked repeatedly when we'll be running it again. You can read more about it inside this jam-packed newsletter.

We've also continued with our usual behind-the-scenes work: fulfilling grave searches, uncovering new stories to share, and planning upcoming tours. We have had our AGM, which was full of ideas. It's been fantastic to welcome back our returning members for another year, and a special shout-out to all our new members! Thank you all for your support. We look forward to seeing you at an event or around the cemetery soon.

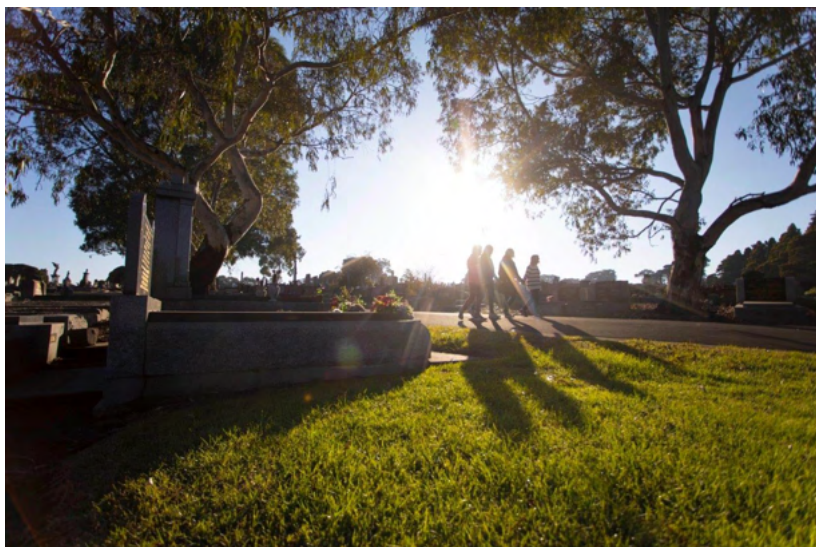
I won't give away too much more – I'll let you read on and discover what we've been up to...

Thank you again for being part of FoCC.

*Kelly Morgan, President*

## A Walk Through Time

There's something quietly captivating about walking through Coburg Cemetery on a sunny afternoon. The paths wind between grand monuments and humble plaques, each marking a life once lived in the neighbourhood we know today. Some names are still familiar from local streets and buildings; others have faded from memory but remain part of the story of Melbourne's north. Every visit reveals something new: an inscription you hadn't noticed before, a bird nesting in an old tree, or a flower left by a stranger.



Over the years, the Friends of Coburg Cemetery have come to see this place not just as a burial ground but as a living archive, a green space filled with stories, art, and traces of everyday life. It's a reminder that history isn't locked away in libraries or museums; it's all around us, quietly waiting to be found. Whether you join one of our tours, visit a family grave, or simply wander the paths, you're part of that ongoing story too.

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## Lt. Col. Reuben Edwards - Salvation Army Pioneer

Lieutenant Colonel Reuben Edwards played a key role in the early history of *The Salvation Army* in Australia and New Zealand. Remembered for his faith, energy and leadership, he was among the first officers to help establish the Army's presence across the southern hemisphere.

Reuben was born in Bedfordshire, England, in 1862. As a young boy of three, he witnessed the very first Salvation Army march through the streets of London. Captivated by the spectacle, his family followed the procession and attended their first meeting — an experience that profoundly shaped his life and led to his lifelong devotion to the Army's mission.

In 1882, Reuben joined the first group of officers sent from England to Australia. He went on to pioneer Salvation Army work in Queensland, New South Wales and New Zealand, taking part in some of the Army's earliest meetings in Brisbane in June 1885 alongside other early leaders such as Adjutant Edward Wright and Captain Bowerman.

Two years earlier, in 1884, Captains Edwards and Fraser had attracted local attention, and a fine of four shillings, for leading a Sunday march through Albury!

OUR QUEENSLAND EXPEDITION



STAFF-OFFICER EDWARDS. ADJUTANT WRIGHT. CAPTAIN BOWERMAN. MRS. WRIGHT  
THE GROUP OF OFFICERS WHO ARRIVED IN BRISBANE IN JUNE 1885<sup>5</sup>

Over the following decades, Reuben's dedication and leadership saw him rise through the Army's ranks, eventually becoming Lieutenant Colonel, a role reflecting his major contribution to the Army's growth and influence in the region.

Reuben Edwards passed away in 1942 at the age of 80. He is buried at Coburg Cemetery with his wife Katherine and daughter Elsie, in Baptist Section P, Grave 765X.



## Samuel Leakey Bartlett - Gardener, Settler, Family Man

Born in Somerset, England, in 1838, Samuel Leakey Bartlett married Anna Dare Cousins in Bristol in 1864. Just a year later, the young couple were already halfway around the world. Their first child, Francis, was born in Christchurch, New Zealand, the beginning of a family that would eventually number sixteen children.

While in New Zealand, Samuel worked as head gardener at Government House, where he helped shape the estate's formal English-style gardens. Like many of his time, this meant replacing native species with European plants, reflecting the prevailing colonial attitudes to landscape design.

After a decade in New Zealand, the Bartletts boarded the *Alhambra* bound for Melbourne, travelling in steerage, the lowest class of passage. They arrived on 18 February 1875, a date carefully noted in Anna's family Bible.

Settling in Preston, Samuel and Anna bought seven acres of land along Spring Street. Drawing on his extensive horticultural knowledge, Samuel established a florist and market garden that became a well-known local landmark known as *Spring Farm*. The photo shows Samuel and Anna, likely with their youngest daughter Ellen and a farm worker, on the property in the 1890s.

Samuel Bartlett died on Christmas Eve 1929, aged 90. He rests in Methodist A, Grave 705, alongside his wife Anna (d. 1927) and daughter Anna Jane (d. 1953).

With such a large family, there are many more Bartlett stories yet to tell, including tales of untimely deaths, wartime service and enterprising descendants.

*Samuel and Anna, with a farm worker and possibly their daughter Ellen in Preston in the 1890s*



### 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)

## From a Chance Encounter to a Growing List: Boer War Servicemen at Coburg

In late November last year, one of our members, Steve Pritchard, was visiting Melbourne General Cemetery when he struck up a conversation with a fellow wanderer, Geoffrey Dare OAM. Geoff, as it turned out, is Vice President of the Waverley RSL and was deep into research on Victorian soldiers who fought in the Boer War.

He asked Steve whether any Boer War veterans were buried at Coburg Cemetery. Not sure of the answer, Steve passed the query on to us and we got to work.



A quick search through our records revealed four known servicemen. That list was shared with Geoff, and within just two days, it had grown to twelve. We then reached out to former FoCC Secretary Dr Cheryl Griffin, who generously shared some of her past research, bringing even more names to light.

The collaboration continued with Steve, Geoff, and Kelly meeting up at Coburg Cemetery to locate and photograph the graves of those known at the time. As of July 2025, we now know of 22 Boer War servicemen buried at Coburg.

This evolving project is a reminder of how often our work overlaps and connects. One question can lead to another project, and one conversation can open doors to an entirely new layer of cemetery history. We're never short of people to research and the Boer War project is a perfect example of how curiosity, teamwork, and a shared love of history can uncover stories long buried.

We are continuing deeper research into the lives of these men. One challenge, as Geoff has pointed out, is that although many were Australian, a significant number enlisted overseas making their records difficult or even impossible to access through Australian sources. We will be sure to update you all on the progress of this, it is far from being finished.

From this research, another project has emerged - thanks again, Steve! One of the servicemen on our list, Frederick Downie, returned from South Africa and went

*Kelly Morgan, Steve Pritchard and Steve Hatcher on the hunt for Boer War veterans' graves at Coburg Cemetery. Photo by Geoffrey*

on to serve in the Victoria Police. In 1922, he was credited with introducing a significant piece of policing equipment that is still in use today. (Any guesses? We'll reveal more in a future edition!)

When we first visited his grave, we found that the Downie family grave was unmarked. Steve took it upon himself to try and locate family members to see if the grave could be recognised for Frederick's service, both abroad and here in Victoria.

Finding descendants turned out to be the easy part. What followed was a longer journey of discussion, coordination, and a little bit of persistence. But it's a task we're proud to be part of because every name, every story, and every grave deserves to be remembered.

Frederick's story will be revealed in our next newsletter.

If you know of any others or have any leads, we'd love to hear from you as this will be an ongoing research project. If you know of someone buried in Coburg Cemetery who served in the Boer War, we'd love to hear from you!

You can contact us via email or through our website with any information.

*Kelly Morgan, FoCC President*

## Carelessness or Callousness? A Mother's Complaint

Samuel Frank Crossley was described as a "bright and smart lad of just 20 years of age" who joined the signalling section of the 10th Light Horse Regiment in Perth around 3 October 1914. Very soon he came to Melbourne with other members of his unit for training at Broadmeadows Camp.

Sadly, on 27 October 1914 Samuel became ill and the next day he was conveyed to the field hospital suffering from measles. His condition worsened, and on 7 November he was admitted to Melbourne Hospital with "lung trouble." He died of double pneumonia on 10 November.

What prompted this article in the *Sunday Times* newspaper of 29 November 1914 was that the first Samuel's mother knew of his illness was when she received a telegram from Melbourne Hospital that day (10 November) simply saying, "Samuel Crossley died this morning." Theodosia was angry because if she had known that Samuel was ill, the family would have made their best efforts to get to Melbourne and be with him. It was later acknowledged that the Medical Officer at Broadmeadows did not consider his illness sufficiently serious to warrant notifying Samuel's relatives.

Samuel was buried at Coburg Cemetery on 13 November 1914 – fortunately attended by some of his unit colleagues and with full military honours. All his family could do was place a notice in the Perth newspapers acknowledging his death. But that is not where Theodosia's angst ended. She asked the simple question – could her son's belongings be returned to her? And this is where the real struggle commenced.

She could not get any answers from the military authorities. Theodosia had an ally in Senator Pearce, the Minister for Defence and a Western Australian Senator. She also enlisted the assistance of Sir John Forrest, and he was not happy that his questions of the Defence Department were not being answered quickly enough, so he asked questions in Parliament as well.

Finally, an answer came through in June 1915. Melbourne Hospital said that his clothing had to be destroyed as they were full of vermin. That must be a damning reflection on the sanitary conditions at the Broadmeadows field hospital. And then it was stated, "that there were no documents or personal effects of a sentimental value to the relatives." Who made that decision, I wonder? Surely anything would have been of

sentimental value to his mother!

On Samuel's file in the National Archives we read a terse letter from the Commandant of the 5th Military District in Perth to the Secretary of the Department of Defence stating that they had received a wire from the Commandant of the 3rd Military District (Melbourne) stating that Samuel's effects had been sent back to Perth on 13 January 1915. But when they hadn't arrived, he had made five attempts to ascertain what had happened to them, and had not received a reply. So were there no effects, or did they simply get lost somewhere between Broadmeadows and Perth?

Theodosia continued her fight but sadly her application to claim a war pension on behalf of Samuel was rejected on 23 July 1915. But things didn't end there. On 7 March 1923 an officer of Base Records wrote to Theodosia asking, so that he could dispose of certain war mementos (a Memorial Scroll and King's Message) in respect of Samuel, "kindly advise me whether his father is living, and if so, his present address." They were obviously not willing to deal with a woman – let alone a persistent mother. Theodosia replied, more politely than many of us might have, that her husband "is living and address is as above."

In the turmoil of war, things may get missed, but this is a sad story of the impact that those missteps can have for family members. Fortunately, Samuel is remembered here at Coburg and, unlike many graves we are asked to search, there is a plaque recognising his service.



*Margaret Abbey, FoCC member*



## Green Growth and Changing Landscapes

Visitors to Coburg Cemetery may notice that native grasses are not a prominent feature of the landscape. Decades of herbicide management have meant that little survives beyond the trees, lawns and roses planted by design — and the occasional hardy survivor that grows from graves themselves, like the centuries-old rose we've written about in this newsletter before.

Across Melbourne, however, there's growing interest in cemeteries as green spaces where local flora can thrive once more. At Melbourne General Cemetery, the *Friends of MGC* have launched Project Cultivate, a major initiative planting native grasses and wildflowers across parts of the grounds. The project includes community planting days and visits from local school groups, aiming to reduce herbicide use and create a biodiverse and welcoming place for both people and wildlife.

*Native grasses planted around graves at Melbourne General Cemetery. (Photo courtesy of Friends of Melbourne General Cemetery Facebook page).*

Further north, the Friends of Will Will Rook Cemetery are taking an interest in the native grasses that naturally grow along the nearby creek and bike path. They're working to identify what species are still surviving in that historic landscape—a rare remnant of the northern plains grasslands that once stretched across this region.

And in Castlemaine, the Friends group there has transformed their cemetery into a remarkable example of what can be achieved with dedication and community vision. Native grasses, wildflowers and old headstones now sit together in a setting that's both peaceful and ecologically rich.

While not every cemetery has the rural backdrop of Castlemaine, urban cemeteries like ours offer their own kind of beauty—serene, spacious and steeped in history. As public interest grows in seeing cemeteries as valuable green spaces, it's heartening to see how these living landscapes continue to evolve and support plants that might otherwise be forgotten or out of fashion.



## Tour Report: Tour of Unfortunate Events – 6 March 2025

When we first advertised our upcoming Tour of Unfortunate Events, we could never have predicted just how popular it would be - the event sold out in only four days!

We gathered on the evening of Thursday 6 March for our first tour of the year, and our first night tour in over a year. It was a beautiful evening, and it was wonderful to see so many new faces alongside our regulars.

Despite the sombre theme, 30 people joined us for the tour. We were treated to a glowing sunset, and as the light faded, the candle-lit graves added just the right ambience to the evening.

Over the course of the evening, we visited nine graves - each with its own sad, disastrous and unfortunate tale, the majority were untold until this tour. Stories of ill-fated rescue attempts, train crashes, shipwrecks and workplace accidents. Events that shaped policy or community response, every story held lessons, echoes of resilience, and the power of strength in numbers.



## Then and Now: The Long Family Grave

In May, we were shown a remarkable photograph of the Long family grave, taken sometime between 1938 and 1945.

This estimate comes from the inscription visible in the photo: only the names of Michael and Mary Long appear, whereas today the memorial records all five members of the Long family.

The Longs are buried in Roman Catholic A, Graves 620 and 621:

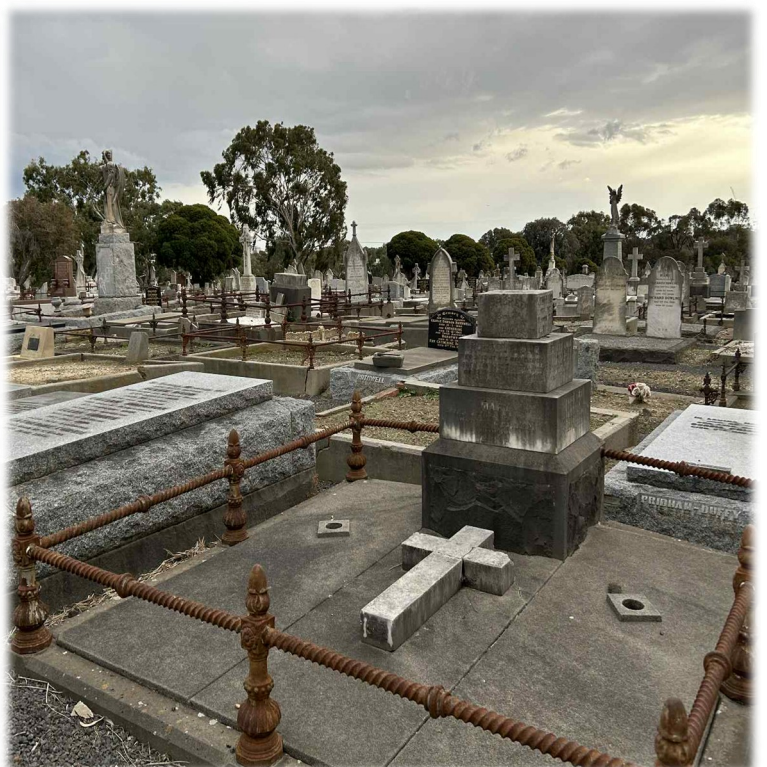
- Michael Long – died 1905
- Mary Long – died 1921
- John Long – died 1938
- Florence (Tressie) Long – died 1942
- Anne Long – died 1945

The early photograph shows a striking white marble cross standing tall above a neat garden plot, edged with an ornate cast-iron fence, typical of the era's Catholic memorials.

In the recent photograph, taken this year, the cross now rests carefully on the base, and the once-bright marble has weathered to a soft grey.

While the angles of the photos aren't quite the same, they tell a powerful story of time, weather, and changing traditions in memorial design and cemetery care. The contrast reminds us how these spaces evolve, just as families and communities do, yet the presence of the Longs, like so many others at Coburg Pine Ridge Cemetery, remains a steadfast link to the past.

*Kelly Morgan, FoCC President*



### Reminder: Change to Coburg Cemetery Visiting Hours

Now that Daylight Saving Time has begun in Victoria, visiting hours at Coburg Pine Ridge Cemetery have changed. The main gates will be open between 7.30am - 7.30pm each day. Please plan your visit accordingly.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

At our recent Annual General Meeting, members agreed that our cemetery tours are one of the most enjoyable and fascinating things we do, and, truth be told, they're also why many people have ever heard of us! We have one more tour scheduled for this year, and several exciting events planned for 2026.



### SYMBOLS OF THE CEMETERY

Have you ever wondered what the  
symbols upon a grave mean?

JOIN US AND LEARN MORE



SUNDAY 16TH NOVEMBER 2025



2:00 - 4:00

MEET INSIDE CEMETERY BEFORE 2:00 PM



COBURG CEMETERY, BELL ST. PRESTON



\$10 (OR FOCC MEMBERS \$2)

CASH ONLY

BOOKINGS NECESSARY

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



### "Symbols of the Cemetery", Sunday 16 November 2025, 2:00 pm

An unusual and intriguing walk exploring the symbols and monuments that fill Coburg Pine Ridge Cemetery. We'll uncover the meanings behind carved angels, clasped hands, broken columns, and other traditional motifs, and then set out to spot examples around the grounds. A fascinating glimpse into the language of stone and remembrance.

### "Friday the 13th – Disasters and Misfortunes", Friday 13 March 2026, 7:30 pm

A twilight tour featuring eerie and dramatic true stories from our past, with some brand-new additions!

### "Entertainers", Saturday 2 May 2026, 2:00 pm

From musicians and actors to jugglers and comedians, this tour celebrates performers and show folk resting within our cemetery's peaceful grounds.

### "Photography Workshop", Date TBC

A hands-on photography class will also be organised in the cemetery, led by a local photographer. Learn how to capture the beauty and atmosphere of heritage headstones, sculptures, and landscapes, perfect for beginners or anyone keen to see the cemetery from a new perspective.

Keep an eye on your inbox, our Facebook page or website for updates, booking details, and reminders. We look forward to seeing you at one (or more!) of these upcoming events.

## Friends of Coburg Cemetery Inc.

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

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