

Gangsters and Murderers in Coburg Cemetery

A cemetery tour that mentions murderers, shoot-outs and sleazy and unsavoury stories was always going to be popular.

The recent "Lawyers, Guns and Money" tour on attracted 50 people all keen to hear seedy stories about cops and gangsters and victims caught in the middle.

Some of the stories featured poor victims who got in the way of angry men with guns. One Ballarat barmaid ended up shot in the eye as her boss yelled about money missing from the day's takings. A policeman died in a shoot-out at Trades Hall and a bank manager was murdered as he lay sleeping on the bank's veranda.

Several well-known Melbourne gangsters of the early 20th century were laid to rest at Coburg, most with unassuming gravestones showing they had been loved and missed. Other stories retold at gravesides included hold-ups by famous bushrangers, a

neighbourly dispute gone wrong and a high-profile businessman mired in deceit and corruption.

This was the last of the cemetery tours by the Friends of Coburg Cemetery in 2016, but considering the popularity of this crime-themed tour we have put it on the agenda again in 2017 (2pm, Sunday 21st May).



Meet the residents

On cemetery tours we often talk about remarkable people who have lived unusual lives. In reality, most people buried at Coburg were everyday people who lived 'normal'



lives, working for ordinary wages, going about the usual daily tasks, raising families, building homes.

Let's meet a couple of residents:

In 1920 Ernie Duncan was a 30 year old ANZAC who was working as a labourer and living in a wooden cottage in Port Melbourne. At the same time, Lydia Davis was a 41 year old widow, raising seven children in a similar little wooden house a few streets away. Her first husband had been a stevedore who died in an accident on the wharves.

Ernie and Lydia met and married and went on to have three more children. They lived their lives and raised their children in Port Melbourne until 1953 when Ernie died. Lydia followed six years later. Both are buried together in one of the Catholic sections of Coburg Cemetery.

Thanks to Ernie's great-niece, Robyn Watters, for the photo and story.

Diary Dates:

2017 TOUR DATES

- 19 FEB - HISTORY OF COBURG CEMETERY
- 21 MAY - LAWYERS, GUNS AND MONEY
- 16 JULY - MONUMENTS AND HEADSTONES
- 15 OCTOBER - THE GOLD RUSH COMES TO COBURG

AGM

- 19 NOVEMBER 2017

SHED DAYS (FOCC MEETINGS)

1 PM, THIRD SUNDAY OF THE MONTH.

- 19 MARCH
- 16 APRIL
- 18 JUNE
- 20 AUGUST
- 17 SEPTEMBER
- 19 NOVEMBER (AGM)

A Word from the President - 2016

Despite many people claiming that 2016 has been an *annus horribilis* with celebrity deaths and election results that have made many of us miserable, for FOCC it has been a busy year with many successes.

Since our 2015 AGM we have:

- conducted six different tours for around 130 people
- held a centenary commemoration for Laurie Cohen
- made progress with the shed stones project, counting and cataloguing the stones (we are still in discussions with GMCT about one-day returning them to their graves)
- sold several poppy tiles to members of ANZAC's families
- streamlined administrative processes
- produced two newsletters
- increased our membership
- conducted countless searches for graves
- provided many photos of headstones to family historians and researchers.

I'd like to thank all members who helped out with various activities throughout the year.

In particular, I'd like to thank David Down who is stepping down from the committee after 5 years as an integral part of the FOCC team. Although David will still be involved in tours, updating our website and other projects, we will miss his tireless work, especially his timely responses to grave search requests and provision of photos of family graves. David has been our Secretary and webmaster and has undertaken many and varied tasks, helping to build FOCC into an active, focused, fun community group.

Thanks also to Lee Anthony and Yvonne Kernan, without whom FOCC tours and activities wouldn't be the successes they are.

I wish all members a joyful, relaxing festive season and look forward to your involvement with Friends of Coburg Cemetery in 2017.

Julie Stratford, President, Friends of Coburg Cemetery

Indian Hawthorn for the taking

Indian Hawthorn shrubs (*Raphiolepis indica*) grow abundantly in Coburg Cemetery.

These bushes are glossy and green with



bracts of pretty pink-tinged white flowers. They can also be so vigorous that they crowd and damage headstones and graves if not kept in check. Originating from various parts of Asia, this is an evergreen shrub that needs very little care once established. It's not listed as a noxious weed and has been spread by birds throughout the cemetery. It will grow from cuttings so, if you have a large space to fill in your garden, don't hesitate to take a cutting!

Tree removals

Nine cypress trees along the James street edge of the cemetery were removed in September 2016 due to safety concerns. Several of these trees were dead and the others had major structural issues or decay.

Friends of Coburg Cemetery Inc.

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Established 2011

President/Administrator: Julie Stratford
Treasurer/Administrator: Lee Anthony

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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 to:

- Prepare and edit this newsletter
- Collect information about the "residents"
- Maintain the website
- Contribute to the website, Facebook page and newsletter
- Undertake a flora and fauna survey and connect with local flora/fauna groups
- Perform grave searches and photograph headstones
- Help to research, prepare and conduct tours
- Prepare grant applications
- Undertake administrative tasks such as taking tour bookings
- Promote FOCC activities
- Coordinate cemetery clean-ups

Contact us to find out more:
focc.group@gmail.com