



# Buried Treasures

Newsletter of Friends of Coburg Cemetery  
Inc. (A0057103A)

Issue One, June 2012

## Welcome

Friends of Coburg Cemetery is a small band of people with a common interest in local history and the preservation, conservation and appreciation of Coburg Cemetery.

We came together in the middle of 2011, encouraged and supported by The Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust (The GMCT).

Our first project was the preparation of a self-guided heritage walk featuring the stories of thirty individuals buried in the Cemetery. To prepare these stories we researched, sourced images, followed family trees, heard anecdotes, connected with family members and descendants and collaborated with other community groups.

We plan to keep researching and will publish our findings in a variety of ways so that we can share the 'buried treasures' we uncover. We plan to hold events and working bees and work to protect and preserve the cemetery and its rich history.

Thank you for joining us on our exciting journey and please encourage others to join this new, dynamic group.

*Julie Stratford (President)*



Image courtesy of The GMCT

## Our aims

To promote an ethic of respect for the history of Coburg Cemetery

To promote the preservation, conservation and appreciation of Coburg Cemetery as a site of local and historical significance

To research all aspects of the Cemetery

To provide learning experiences for the public in order to enrich their knowledge of the Cemetery

To collaborate with other groups on specific projects such as education, conservation and research



Image courtesy of The GMCT

## Who we are



Friends of Coburg Cemetery Committee  
Standing (left to right): Lee Anthony, Wendy Todd, David Down, Marilyn Moore.

Seated (left to right): Cheryl Griffin, Julie Stratford

Image courtesy of Julie Stratford



# The launch

It rained the night before, but the day of the launch of the Coburg Cemetery Self-Guided Heritage Walk was perfect.

It was our launch, too, and we couldn't have asked for a better way to present the Friends of Coburg Cemetery to the world!



**Clockwise from top left:** At the Cemetery Gates; listening to speeches; Gary Jungwirth, The GMCT Trust member; Craig Ondarchie, MLC for Northern Metropolitan Region; Julie Stratford, President of Friends of Coburg Cemetery; MC Wendy Todd, The GMCT Community Engagement Manager and Friends of Coburg Cemetery Committee member; Julie Stratford and The GMCT CEO Jacqui Briggs-Weatherill.



Images courtesy The GMCT

# 21 April 2012



**Clockwise from top left:** John Allison Monkhouse, celebrating 150 years in business; John Allison Monkhouse's horse-drawn hearse; Mayor of Moreland, John Kavanagh with Craig Ondarchie, Jacqui Briggs-Weatherhill and Gary Jungwirth; grave spotting (photo courtesy Julie Stratford); the grave of Said Ahmed Shah, number 5 on the heritage walk; at the rotunda; Clinton Fry and friends entertaining the crowd.

Photos courtesy The GMCT

# Grass fire at Coburg Cemetery



Coburg Fire Brigade in action. Date unknown. Image courtesy of Coburg Historical Society

Horse-drawn fire cart and hose cart.

Photos taken at Maldon Fire Station, 12 May 2012.

Photos courtesy Cheryl Griffin



From the *Coburg Leader*, Saturday 8 March, 1902.

About 3 o'clock on Wednesday afternoon a fire broke out in the Coburg Cemetery, Bell-street east, owned by the Coburg Cemetery trustees. It appears that the fire was first seen by a fireman at the Coburg station, who asked the watchman on the tower the origin of the smoke showing towards Preston. It was then discovered that about eight acres

of grass was on fire at the Coburg Cemetery. The Coburg Brigade were the first on the spot, and altogether five hose carts and fourteen men were in attendance. With the assistance of the Cemetery employees the fire was got under control in about an hour by means of bags and buckets of water. It was then found that with the exception of a few shrubs and ornamental trees there was little damage done beyond the burning of the grass.

# All in a day's work

## Featuring Charles E. Bowden - Caretaker, Coburg Cemetery

Charles Bowden was born at Longdowns, Cornwall in April 1855. He married Elizabeth Symons on Christmas Eve 1879 and the young couple set off immediately on their honeymoon trip - to Australia.

They settled in Coburg, where their first child was born in 1882. Nine more children followed. Most died in infancy or early childhood. Only one child, a daughter, married.

Charles Bowden was a stonemason and son of a stonemason. At home in Cornwall

he lived amongst a community of fellow masons. In Melbourne, he continued his trade until he lost three fingers in an accident. No longer able to work at his trade, he became the caretaker of Coburg Cemetery, a position he held for more than twenty years.

The Bowden family lived in Bell Street during his working lifetime, but on retirement they moved to 209 Nicholson Street, just near the junction with Bell Street.

He is remembered today through the 'Charles Bowden Reserve', on the eastern side of Nicholson

Street, on land he once owned.

A regular worshipper at Coburg Methodist Church, Charles Bowden died in February 1926 aged 71. He is buried in the Methodist section of the Cemetery with his wife Elizabeth and four of their children.

Sources:  
*Coburg Leader*  
Coburg History Society Newsletter, No. 10, November 1979, p.59  
The GMCT burial records  
1871 English Census  
Victorian electoral rolls  
Victorian Birth, Death and Marriage Indexes

### Stealing from a cemetery

Jane Spencer, a 'little girl', was charged with stealing a shrub from Coburg Cemetery on 22 May 1895. Charles Bowden saw her picking flowers and gave evidence at the court case. The charge was dismissed.

*Coburg Leader, 15 June 1895*

### Merri Creek drowning

On 5.30pm on Thursday 9 December 1905, eight year old Doris Hunter drowned in the Merri Creek. She had been playing there with her brother and fell in. The Creek was dragged and her body was recovered some time later by Mr Bowden, caretaker of the Cemetery.

*Coburg Leader, 9 December 1905*

### Coburg Trustees inspect Cemetery

'Despite the recent hot weather, the flower beds looked quite a picture and were found in full bloom, while the main drive, with its flowers and shrubs, is a credit to the trustees and to the curator, Mr Bowden.

*Coburg Leader, 9 March 1907*



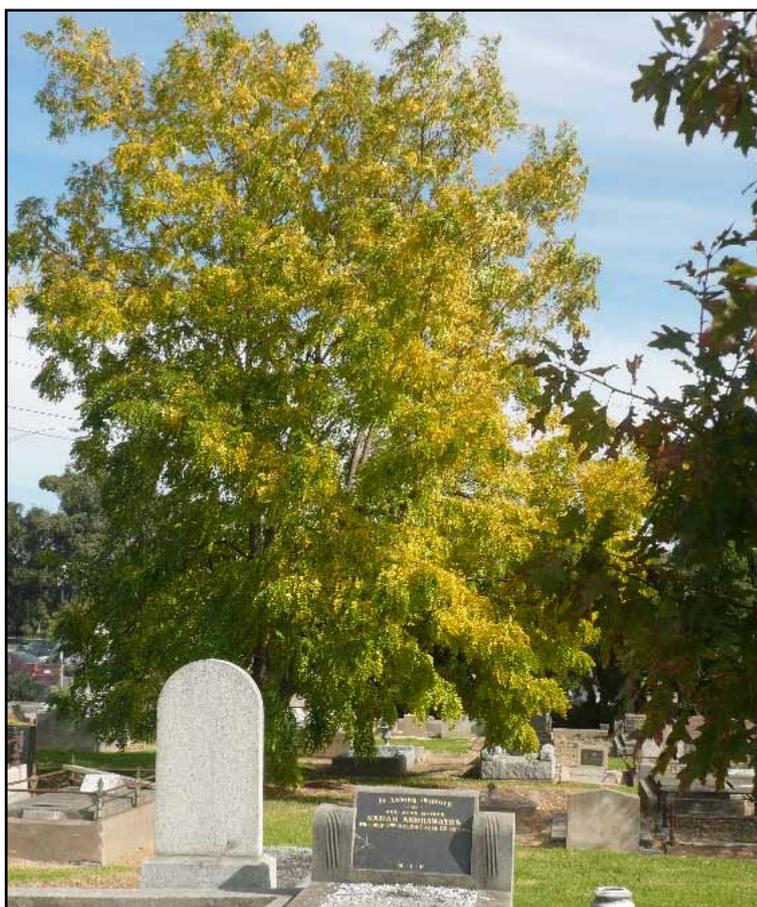
Cemetery gates, circa 1908. Photo courtesy Coburg Historical Society.

# Around the cemetery



Clockwise from top left: Poppies on grave (August 2011), Autumn colours (April 2012), native shrub (November 2011)

Images courtesy of Cheryl Griffin



## Can you help?

Can you identify the native shrub in the photo on the right? If so, please let us know.

Are you interested in helping to prepare an inventory and map of the plants in the Cemetery? If so, please contact us.







## A call to action Can you help?

We have many ideas for future projects, including:

- preparing an inventory and map of the plantings in the cemetery
- developing a graves at risk register
- developing an image archive
- a collaborative research project with Coburg Historical Society on Coburg and the First World War
- preparing an International Women's Day walk
- photographing and indexing graves
- preparing a walk on Coburg pioneers
- collecting stories relating to the cemetery and the people buried there
- preparing a walk on people in the social services

It's even been suggested that we develop a walk based on given names! eg Mary, William, Dorothy, James.

If you can help us, or you have suggestions for other projects we might undertake, please let us

### Tell us your story

Do you have a story to share about your experiences of Coburg Cemetery? Maybe you have photos and memorabilia you can share with us?

Join us at Coburg Cemetery on Sunday  
17 June 2012 between 11.00am and 1.00pm  
and tell us your story.

We'll be in the shed near the rotunda and are looking forward to meeting you.

## Buried Treasures

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Copy deadlines for 2012:

Friday 17 August  
Friday 16 November