



AROUND THE GRAVES

ISSN 1835-5641
ISSN 1835-565X

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF CHELTENHAM AND REGIONAL CEMETERIES INC.

Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of *Around the Graves!* The Friends of Cheltenham and Regional Cemeteries Inc. was formed in May 2007 to promote the conservation and appreciation of the Cheltenham and Regional Cemeteries as places of local, state and national importance. Produced bi-monthly, our aim is for the newsletter to further the aims of the group and be informative and interesting. Enjoy!

The Three Rs

So *what do we do?* Our motto is "research, restore, remember" and summarises what we aim to do. And we do this by:

- ☞ *Researching* the lives of those interred and sharing this information for the benefit of future generations
- ☞ *Restoring* gravesites by raising funds through close links with interested parties and other stakeholders
- ☞ *Remembering* the contribution of those from our past by running regular walking tours.

For more information about our aims, visit our website:

www.focrc.org/aboutus.htm

Did you know?

It is not commonly known that the Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery (Charman Road) actually opened for interments on 3 October 1864 when the Rules and Regulations and Schedule of Fees was published in the *Victorian Government Gazette* even though the first interment took place on 27 March the following year. In fact, the origins of the Pioneer Cemetery can be traced as far back as 18 March 1863 when the first Trustees were appointed. That it took nearly two years before the first interment was typical of the times. (Source: VGG 11 October 1864 p2275-76)

Tour of the Pioneer Cemetery

The Friends marked an important milestone in our short history when on 10 October we conducted our first cemetery tour. An extraordinary amount of volunteer work goes into putting together walking tours and our inaugural tour was no exception with over 100 hours contributed by a hard working Committee.



above:
Jenny Coates guiding the inaugural tour of the Pioneer Cemetery

Over 25 people attended the tour which was held as a free event by the Cemetery Trust as part of Senior Citizens' Week. A repeat tour is planned for 10 February 2008 (see *details overleaf*) so be sure to book your place today.

Members

New Members

We welcome to the following foundation members who have joined since the inauguration of the Friends in May 2007:

Joan Ambler of Tanah Merah (Qld); Basile Birbillis of Hampton East; Janette Bomford of Newport; Pamela & Robert Chappell of Cheltenham; Shirley Chiller OAM of Caulfield North; Bev Crawford of Coolum (Qld); Gordon Fagg of Cheltenham; George Halvagis of Mentone; Cheryl Meier of Chelsea and Alison Stephen of Ringwood.

Membership is only \$5.00 so why not join today? We are keen to sign up more members to enable the Committee to obtain grants from government bodies, so if you know of anyone interested in the Cheltenham cemeteries, please let them know about us.

Members' Area

We have launched the Members' Area of our website where all financial members can access restricted content not available to the general public. The site can be now be

Christina and Harry: The Untold Story

I started delving into family history well over twenty years ago. Amongst the many old family photos my Nana showed me was one that intrigued me. On the back of the photo there was writing which read "James Varty with his Grandmother Streeter - probably Harriet". I thought about the inscription, my Pa (James Alfred Henry Thomas Varty) had two sets of Grandparents, he would have Grandparents Varty and Grandparents White (his mother Christina's maiden name), how then could he have a Grandmother named Harriet Streeter?

In 1999, I was unexpectedly sent a photocopy of a photo that means the world to me. The picture was sent from Les Hayes, son of Harriett Elizabeth Varty who I had a conversation with about family history at a family funeral some months before. The photo was taken at the Lower Dandenong Road home of Christina Varty and Harry Streeter! There had been rumours that such a photo existed but for years but nobody seemed to know anything about it. To find that it did exist was the proof needed to substantiate Christina and Harry's relationship. In the photo is my Grandfather James Alfred Henry Thomas Varty his sister Harriett Elizabeth (Lizzie) Varty, their father Harry Streeter and mother Christina Varty as well as some unidentified people.

It is very evident from family memorabilia that Christina loved her family very much and if my Pa's letters he wrote home to his mother during his service in the army during the First World War are any indication, she was absolutely adored by her children.

Trying to imagine what life was like for Christina Varty after her husband left, dealing with being a single mother with a large family some of whom were still babies and having

limited income is overwhelming. No doubt Christina's older children would have been a help to her. Certainly she had her own family near by for support, but times would have been tough for everyone.

Christina Varty died in 1920 at the Kensington home of her daughter Harriett Hayes (*née* Varty). She was 64 years and was buried at the Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery on 18 December 1920. Christina is not buried with Harry Streeter, but at least they are in the same resting ground.

Members of the Varty family even to this day have trouble accepting the facts about our ancestry or prefer not to know. Christina and Harry although now at rest deserve to have what is known about their story told and their relationship acknowledged. I am certain that there was more to their story but at least what is known is out in the open. I am extremely proud of my heritage.

Members can read Anne Turner's full story by visiting the Members' area of our website and follow the links:

www.focrc.org/members.htm



above:
Christina and Harry at their Lower Dandenong Road, Mentone home circa 1902

below:
Christina Varty's gravesite at the Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery



Hazel Wilson: A Murder unresolved

Melbourne was in the grip of panic with the murder of three young women in quick succession during the summer of 1930-31. After the discovery of the last of the victims, the talk of the town was the possibility of a serial killer at large. Sixteen year old (Adelaide) Hazel Wilson was described as "popular, very high spirited and daringly unconventional" who was given freedom to indulge in her love of dancing. But fate reared its ugly head on the morning of 10 January 1931 when Hazel's body was found in a vacant

allotment block just 200 yards from her home in Melton Avenue, Ormond. Witnesses would testify seeing Wilson talking to a man outside her home the previous night. The identity of the man remained a mystery and the case baffled police.

Hazel Wilson is featured in our forthcoming tour of the Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery (Charman Road) at 2:00pm on Sunday 10 February 2008. Cost is \$10.00 (\$5.00 for members). Bookings are essential and can be made online www.focrc.org/tours.htm or by ringing 9583 5814.