

AN HISTORIC WALK AROUND THE NILLUMBIK CEMETERY



Sparks Jones Collection

Mr Weeks, his wife and seven children, man his coaches outside the cemetery gates in 1911. The inscription "*Janva Vitae*" means *Gate of Life*.

EXTRACT FROM THE WILL OF WILLIAM ELLIS BEQUEATHING ONE HUNDRED POUNDS FOR THE ERECTION OF ENTRANCE GATES:

"This is the last will and testament of me William Ellis of Diamond Creek Nillumbik in the County of Evelyn and Colony of Victoria Farmer.....

.....I direct the said Company to expend a sum not exceeding one hundred pounds in the construction and erection of an entrance gate at the Diamond Creek Cemetery in accordance with a design which shall first be submitted to and approved by my wife Louisa Ellis....."

TO LOCATE GRAVES

The cemetery is divided into 5 Compartments:

- Compartment 1. Front right.
- Compartment 2. Rear right.
- Compartment 3. Rear left.
- Compartment 4. Front left.
- Compartment 5. Extreme left corner.

Each compartment is divided into double rows numbered from the central path and the two rows designated A or B.

Graves numbers in each row follows no logical pattern. To find a marked grave it is sometimes easier to follow a row down until you find the required headstone rather than to use grave numbers.

Boundaries of each Compartment are also unclear.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This walk is conducted by the Nillumbik Historical Society Inc. by courtesy of the Nillumbik Cemetery Trust.

Information comes from an unpublished thesis HISTORY THROUGH MONUMENTS by Mary Reid, and from records of the Nillumbik Historical Society Inc. The aim of the walk is to increase public respect and care for this historic cemetery.

FAMILIES WHO GAVE THEIR NAMES TO OUR STREETS.

Thomas Collins (1849 – 1926) C 1. R1B. (Family graves)

In 1888 Thomas Collins established the Diamond Creek Brass Band which played at many public functions. He gave his name to the street in which he lived, and his home which still stands at 25 Collins Street, was built for him in 1891.

James Cowin & Flora (1845 – 1908) C3. R 1B.

The Cowin family, with other orchardists who came to Diamond Creek century ago, made this district one of Melbourne's chief fruit growing areas. It was noted for the quality and flavour of its Jonathan apples.

William Ellis & Louisa (1810 – 1896) C1. R1B. (Indistinct inscription).

William Ellis purchased 150 acres of land in 1850 – the site of Ellis Cottage – where he established a model farm, known as Ellis Park. He bequeathed one hundred pounds for the erection of the cemetery gates. Interestingly, his nephew Nathaniel left money for the erection of gates at the Yarra Glen cemetery.

Cornelius Sharp Haley (1807 – 1886) C1. R1A. (Family graves)

Cornelius Haley purchased a property at Hurstbridge in 1852, which he named *Allwood*. He went on to purchase 216 acres in the present township area of Diamond Creek, which included the present shopping malls, railway station and football ground. He held other land holdings throughout Victoria. He moved to the Romsey district where he is buried. Members of his family intermarried with local families, and are buried in the Diamond Creek Cemetery.

John Lawrey & Honor. (1830 – 1914) C1. R1B.

John Lawrey , one of the districts earliest pioneers , raised five sons and five daughters in Diamond Creek. His home *TRENOWIN*, built in 1891 by local builder Drinkwater, still stands and is being carefully restored by members of his family.



Sparks-Jones Photo

The Lawrey home *Trenowin* in Stone Street

Patrick Ryan & Mary Jane. (1856- 1926) C3. R2B. (Unmarked.)

Patrick Ryan, another public spirited man, represented Diamond Creek on the Council of the Shire off Heidelberg for some 20 years. He became President of the Shire in 1898. His son John – buried elsewhere in the cemetery- likewise took a major part in community affairs and became Mayor of Heidelberg in 1939.

Clarence Thomas Norton Stone & Nellie. (1908 – 1994) C4. R1B. “Clarrie” Stone is one of the more recent arrivals in the cemetery. Clarrie established the Diamond Creek Rural Fire Brigade and the first radio communications with suburban fire brigades in Victoria. He was a man of enormous enthusiasm for the town and its people and was awarded the OBE. More recent technology enables Clarrie’s image to appear on his tombstone.

John Wilson & Martha.(1796 – 1875) C1. R1A. .(Family graves)

John Wilson was probably Diamond Creek’s first white settler. There is evidence that he lived in the area in 1847 . He established a butchers shop in Melbourne and grazed his sheep and pigs on the banks of the Diamond Creek from where he also sold meat; indeed the first loose name given to this area was *Wilson’s*.

His original farm with its split timber house stood on a knoll of land just below the windmill off Ryan’s Road.

SOME INTERESTING PEOPLE ARE BURIED IN THE CEMETERY

Phillip Cummings & Lucy (1817 – 1884) C1. R1A.

Phillip Cummings owned a farm on the corner of Phipps Cres and Main Road. His barn served both as the first school in the area, and as the local post office
Just across the road stood the Primitive Methodist Church.

George Leggat & Phoebe (1838 – 1903) C1. R1.

This is one of the more elaborately carved tombstones, with a very long inscription. Note the spelling mistake PHILANTROPHY !. His tombstone contains glowing description of his character..

William Marsden (1944 – 1983) C5. R6

Marsden's tombstone tells the tragic story: *'DIED FIGHTING BUSH FIRES AT UPPER BEACONSFIELD ON ASH WEDNESDAY 16TH FEBRUARY 1983'*

Marsden is one of many unsung heroes who are buried in this cemetery, whose tales will never be told.



Reid Photo

Gordon Coventry & Christabel (1901-1968) C1.R5A

One of the football greats, Gordon Coventry played 306 games for Collingwood and held the record as the Code's greatest goal kicker for more than 60 years, with 1299 goals, until Tony Lockett beat it in 1999. Both Gordon and his brother Syd played for Diamond Creek.
The Coventry family were among our earliest settlers.

Alan Marshall (1903 – 1984) C2. R3A.

A prolific short story writer, Alan Marshall is best known for his book *I Can Jump Puddles*, which is a biography of his struggle against polio. Marshall's mother and father, are also buried in this cemetery.

Edward Melian Showers (1847 – 1917) C3. R1B.

This is one of the graves of a little known person who had an interesting background. Showers was formerly a Commissioner of Police in India and then in South Africa. He would almost certainly be of British origin, but why he came to Australia, or why he is buried at Diamond Creek we do not know.

DESIGN OF TOMBSTONES

The earliest grave were usually very simple in structure, probably reflecting the economic poverty our first settlers, however by the end of the 19th century simple rounded headstones were erected by those who could afford them. These contained little ornamentation apart from the details of the deceased. Many of these stones are found along the right side of the path.



Reid Photo

At the turn of the century the more affluent installed wrought iron railings, often twisted in decorative patterns. From the 1930's headstones became less decorative, with flat slabs predominating.

In very recent years the European influence began to emerge with profuse decoration and rich symbolism, a conspicuous example being that of Salvatore Caccetta.

Salvatore Caccetta C2. R5B

This tomb is one of the most ornate in the cemetery. Constructed of highly polished stone, with an open book in Italian, it contains statues of Christ, of the Virgin Mary and of angels. A glassed cabinet is secured with a lock.



Reid Photo

George Stebbings grave (1896). C1. R2B.

This is one of the most impressive tombs with its large headstone, and surrounded with a high wrought iron fence. Access is obtained through a gate at the foot of the tomb. The inscription includes two pieces of poetry.

Patrick Murphy (1910). C4. R1.

A low iron fence surrounds a beautifully proportioned marble cross. The symbols reflect his Irish background.

William Scott Cameron 1886. C3. R2A.

This ornate tomb is surmounted by a shrouded urn – the only one in the cemetery. The monument is one of the tallest in the cemetery.

SOME OF THE SYMBOLS USED ON GRAVE STONES

The cross. The most common symbol.

Butterfly. Dobson. C4. R5A

Clasped hands. John Murphy C4.R1B etc

Children. McGhee. C2. R6A.

Open book. Showers. C3. R1B etc

Vines. Verso. C3. R3A

Gum trees Mc Ghee. C2. R6A

Shamrock. Murphy C4. R1B

Buds on stems. Jenkins. C2. R5A

Church Scene. Reid. C2. R3A.

Urn. Cameron C3. R2A

Masonic emblem. Whicker C3. R2B

Lions Club badge. Tennant. C4. R5B.

AIF Rising Sun. Murphy C4. R1B

RSL badge. Sutherland

RAF Badge. Williamson. C5. R7B.

RAAF Badge. Stone. C2. R7A.

Harp. Murphy C4 R1B

Country Scene. O'Day C2. R4A

Seadon C4. R3b. Some of the symbols on this headstone are recognised, but some are unfamiliar.

Presented by Rev. Jock Ryan

With help from the Nillumbik Historical Society Inc.

Please visit Ellis Cottage, Memory Lane, Diamond Creek 2 - 4.00 pm first Sunday of every month.