



AROUND THE GRAVES

ISSN 1835-5641
ISSN 1835-565X

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF CHELTENHAM AND REGIONAL CEMETERIES INC.

The Centenarians

The Centenarians is the title of our first booklet currently in production and features the profiles of those buried in the Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery who reached the grand old age of 100. Amongst the centenarians is Catherine

“Granny” Childerhouse who outlived all her 18 offspring before passing away on 18 September 1923 aged 105. An inmate of the Benevolent Asylum, Cheltenham, Childerhouse was “made a great pet of” with each birthday and the “staff rather spoilt her”. *The Argus* newspaper reported that;

“Mrs. Childerhouse was born in England. She was brought to Australia by her father, Colour-sergeant Foley, who is reputed to have been in charge of the first boat of convicts transported to Van Dieman’s Land, when she was aged only 12 months. When aged 12 years, she returned to England with

her parents, and later went to India, where she was married to John Childerhouse. The greater part of her married life was spent in India, but Mrs. Childerhouse had travelled to Australia several times before finally settling here. She was the mother of 18 children, all of whom, however, are dead. There are several grandchildren resident in Australia. One of her sons, aged 72 years, died in the Cheltenham asylum in 1921, and it was when visiting him that Mrs. Childerhouse was persuaded to enter the home to be cared for when she was aged 96 years”. (Source: *The Argus* 2 July 1923 p7 & 11 Aug 1923 p6)

Did you know?

That the Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery contains the remains of 33 persons of Chinese origin and that remarkably, not one has a headstone monument? All were

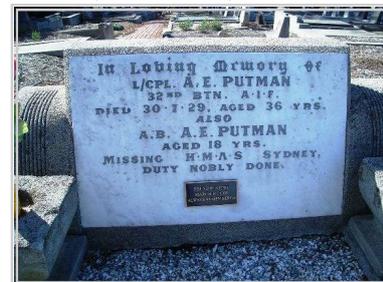
buried between May 1911 and February 1929 and include names such as: Le Chung (79), Lep Pong (80), Ah Hen (87), Ah Chung Fuoy (81), Yung Eng (85), Ah Chun Tang (68) and Cheong Wong (72). The earliest born was Ah Sing in 1823/24 who died aged 88 in December 1912. Chinese market gardeners were common in the Cheltenham area as were a group of fisherman on the Mordialloc Creek in the 1850s, “catching and salting fish for sale to Chinese miners”.

HMAS Sydney

Ordinary Seaman Albert Edward Putman lost his life when the pride of the Royal Australian Navy, HMAS Sydney vanished on 19 November 1941, 112 nautical miles from the Western Australian coast. The final chapter came to a close in August with the report by former judge Terence Cole who found that the cruiser’s captain, Joseph Burnett was to blame. Memorials to the 645 crewmen who perished can be seen throughout many cemeteries around Australia. At the Pioneer Cemetery, Putman is remembered on the grave where his parents, Albert Edward (d 1929) and Ethel May (d 1972) are buried. It reads:

In loving memory of / L/Cpl. A. E. Putman / 32nd Btn. A.I.F. / died 30.7.29, aged 36 yrs. / also / A. B. A. E. Putman / aged 18 yrs. / missing H.M.A.S Sydney. / duty nobly done.

Born on 28 June 1923 at Launceston, Tasmania, Putman was a motor-cycle mechanic before he enlisted with the RAN on 22 May 1940. He joined the crew of Sydney just nine months before its encounter with the German raider, *Kormoran*. (Source: *The Age* 13 Aug 2009 (online), National Archives Australia—War Service Record of A E Putman <http://naa12.naa.gov.au/Scripts/Imagine.asp?B=4508344&SE=1&I=1>)



above:
Inscription on the Putman family grave—Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery (Pres “76” 2A)

One Family's Priceless Photo of Memories



left:
The Nettle family at the grave of Ellen Nettle in 1926 (CofC "93" 31). Pictured are (l-r) Amy Jones, Ellen (Nellie) Frencham and Edie Giddes holding her nephew Dexter Jones (aged 3). Vic Frencham and cousin Thea Jones (both aged 6) stand in front.

Note the wild terrain without the brick paths and the new headstone monuments, sparsely dotted across the landscape.

(Photo copyright, family of Vic Frencham)

The photo above is a unique, rare and priceless piece of cemetery memorabilia courtesy of the family of Vic Frencham. Back in March 2009, three sisters—Vicki, Sue and Robyn—attended one of our cemetery tours and brought along the photo to show. After months of begging, pleading, encouraging and a little threatening, we are pleased to unveil the photo in this issue of *Around the Graves*.

Pictured are the three Nettle sisters with their children taken shortly after the burial of their mother and grandmother, Ellen Nettle at the Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery in August 1926. Over the following years, two of the sisters and their husbands, Nellie (1953) and Roy Frencham (1957) and Amy (1987) and Vic Jones (1965) were also buried in the family plot, after their deaths. In 2008, the ashes of Vic Frencham's wife Patricia née Quigley were also interred in the plot, which was reconstructed and renovated at the time, and in 2009, the ashes of his older brother Don Frencham were relocated from The Necropolis, Springvale.

A fit and healthy 89-year-old Vic Frencham shares some of his memories as recorded by Vicki McGrath;

"Regular visits to the Cemetery occurred most weekends, usually on a Saturday and usually by train. Private car ownership was relatively rare and as my father was a train driver so we were frequent train travellers. Travel by horse and cart was common around the area at this time and people also walked quite long distances.

My aunties generally bought flowers from their own gardens, but there were flower sellers set up at the entrance to the Cheltenham and many other cemeteries on most weekends. Water for the flowers (before the days of plastic) was quite a problem with very few taps in the Cemetery and many people had metal water containers chained to trees so they could water the fresh flowers they bought in, to help them last through the following week. We were pleased when, many years later, a tap was placed right beside the family grave!

There are still one or two chains in trees in the Cemetery that may date back to the 1920s. There were no paved or asphalted paths in those days. These were added in later years [Ed-during the Great Depression].

I particularly remember a grave toward the front and left of the Cemetery. The grave was of a little boy who had drowned at the beach and there was a little boat and toys on the headstone. These have not survived the years.

I also remember visiting one Saturday and hearing in the distance the names of my older brother Don (playing football for Mordialloc) and uncle Vic Jones (coach of Mordialloc) being shouted by supporters (or not) as they played football on the nearby Cheltenham Oval. Both men now lay at rest in the family grave where the sounds of football matches can still be heard through the football season. I remember at the time I would have preferred to be watching the game."

The Friends are always keen to hear from anyone willing to share with us photos of the Cheltenham cemeteries.

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