

R.I.P

Rookwood In Profile

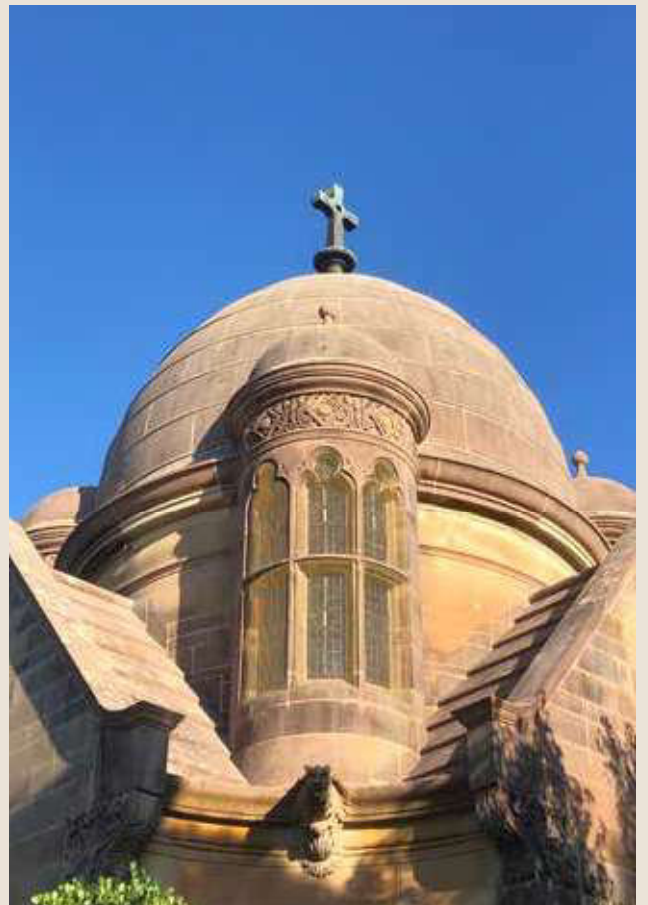
Newsletter of Friends of
Rookwood Inc.

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Frazer Mausoleum Unveiling Ceremony

22nd October 2024



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President's Report

Members of the Friends of Rookwood attended its Annual General Meeting on Sunday 17th November. I presented my report, detailing events and activities that we have been involved in during the year.

Stephen O'Regan, our Treasurer, gave us a comprehensive report of the year's accounts dated from July-June, whereas the President's report is dated from January – December.

Election of the Committee was conducted, and the following people were elected for 2025:

President

Robyn Hawes OAM

Vice President

Carolyn Nimmo

Secretary

Julie Rusten

Treasurer

Stephen O'Regan

Committee

Margaret Warn, Brian Humphrys, Geoff Bovard, Corey Grosvenor.

We were joined by Denise Ora, CEO of Metropolitan Memorial Parks (MMP), she was able to explain to us how the new system in the operation of the Rookwood General cemetery will take place. We thank her for taking the time to be part of our meeting.

This edition of our RIP has been prepared for us by the staff of MMP.

Let's hope that 2025 will bring us many new experiences and that we will be able to share the history we have at Rookwood, as well as continuing our aim of raising funds for restoration work.

Rookwood Necropolis Cemetery is jointly managed land by Metropolitan Memorial Parks Land Manager and All Faiths Catholic Land Manager Limited.

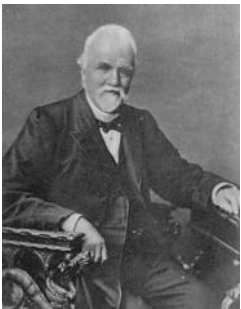
Robyn Hawes OAM,
President

Embracing Legacy:

A Journey from Botanic Gardens of Sydney to Metropolitan Memorial Parks.



As I settle into my new role as CEO of Metropolitan Memorial Parks, including the esteemed Rookwood General Cemetery (Rookwood), I find myself reflecting on the myriad of connections that have shaped my journey in the world of nature, conservation, and heritage. My time as CEO of the Botanic Gardens of Sydney was not just a professional chapter; it was a love affair with the natural world, a commitment to preserving our rich botanical heritage, and a deep appreciation for extraordinary public spaces that inspire and connect us.



In many ways, my passion for landscape architecture and conservation can be traced back to the legacy of Charles Moore, Director, Botanic Garden

Sydney (1848 - 1896) (resting peacefully at Rookwood), a figure whose contributions resonate profoundly at both the (now) Royal Botanic Garden Sydney and Rookwood. Moore was not just a botanist; he was a visionary, instrumental in designing landscapes that harmonised beauty with functionality. He played a pivotal role in expanding the collections at the Royal Botanic Garden and ensuring that rare specimens were carefully cultivated and studied. This commitment to botanical diversity is mirrored in Rookwood, where many plant species have been incorporated into the landscape, enhancing its beauty and ecological significance.

One fascinating aspect of Charles Moore's legacy is the introduction of specific plant specimens from the Botanic Gardens to Rookwood (known then as Haslams Creek). His dedication to horticulture led to the careful selection and transplantation of native and exotic species, creating an environment that is not only aesthetically pleasing but also ecologically valuable. The trees and shrubs that grace Rookwood today bear witness to Moore's vision, contributing to the cemetery's serene atmosphere and providing a habitat for local wildlife.

Moreover, the scientific significance of the plant specimens at Rookwood cannot be understated. The diversity of flora present within the cemetery serves as a living laboratory for understanding plant adaptation, resilience, and the interplay of species in a designed landscape. The cemetery features a range of trees, including significant specimens such as stunning 'Moreton Bay Figs and Hoop Pines' along with various native eucalyptus species, which not only enhance the landscape but also offer insights into the region's ecological history.

As a space that marries remembrance with nature, Rookwood holds a unique position in the narrative of Sydney's botanical heritage. It stands as a testament to the importance of preserving not just our cultural history but also our natural environment. The trees, plants, and landscapes of Rookwood contribute to the broader understanding of conservation efforts and the ecological narratives that inform our urban environments.

In my dual roles, I see the profound connections between these two iconic sites. Both the Royal Botanic Garden and Rookwood are sanctuaries that nurture our relationship with nature, history, and heritage. They remind us of the importance of conservation—not just of our environment, but of the stories and memories that define us. It is this intertwining of life and legacy that fuels my commitment to fostering a deeper understanding of our natural and cultural heritage.

As I continue this new chapter, I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead. Together with the dedicated and amazing team at Metropolitan Memorial Parks and support from the wonderful Friends of Rookwood, I aim to enhance the beauty and accessibility of Rookwood, ensuring it remains a cherished space for reflection and remembrance. We will honour its past while embracing innovative ways to engage our community, celebrating the connections between nature, history, and the human experience.

In the spirit of Charles Moore, I invite you to join me in this journey. Let us honour our shared legacy, celebrate the extraordinary public places that enrich our lives, and nurture our love for nature and conservation. Together, we can continue to cultivate spaces that inspire, connect, and uplift—all while preserving the stories that shape our collective memory.

Denise Ora
CEO, Metropolitan Memorial Parks

Frazer Mausoleum

Unveiling Ceremony

Tuesday 22nd October 2024 saw approximately 200 people gather on the site of the Frazer Mausoleum to witness the 'unveiling ceremony' of the restored Frazer Mausoleum. The date chosen almost coincided with the 140th anniversary of the death of John Frazer, the patriarch of this branch of the Frazer family.

The event celebrated the restoration of this iconic Rookwood landmark – a 'true architectural glory of Rookwood' that was built in 1890 from stunning Pyrmont sandstone and now restored to its former glory.

The Friends of Rookwood was well represented at the event and attended alongside descendants of John Frazer, cemetery restoration staff and interested members of the public.



Frazer unveiling - Commemorative biscuit

The program for the morning included short presentations made by Metropolitan Memorial Parks Land Manager's CEO, Denise Ora, Mr Mark Allen (great great grandson of John Frazer), Matthew Johnson (Heritage Specialist and Supervisor of the Stone Masonry team, RGC) and Sach Killam (Heritage Specialist and Stone Mason, RGC). All gave those present further insight into the history of the Mausoleum and the Frazer family connections to it as well the processes that were used to accomplish the result we now have in respect of the Frazer Mausoleum.

The restoration of the mausoleum was carried out over several years in partnership with The Friends of Rookwood, with intense activity during the last eighteen months. The funding for the restoration was sourced from the NSW Government, Rookwood Cemetery and The Friends of Rookwood.



Frazer descendants with Restoration staff and FOR volunteers.

A highlight for us was that at the end of the proceedings our President Robyn Hawes was presented with a key to the Mausoleum designed and crafted by Sach Killam. This key will enable us to include the Mausoleum on some of our regular tours.

Following the completion of the formal program, those present were treated to refreshments (including a commemorative biscuit) and the opportunity to inspect the completed restoration both internally and externally. A specially produced video on the restoration was also available for viewing. Everyone agreed that the building is once again a joy to behold.



Margaret Warn Sach Killam Robyn Hawes and Matt Johnson - Key Presentation



Two pictures of the great gargoyles that form part of this splendid mausoleum – the one on the left shows water actually flowing through it and the one on the right shows a local visitor

Working on the Frazer Mausoleum

The Frazer Mausoleum conservation works gave us the opportunity to see all sorts of interesting details which are generally hidden or inaccessible. Particular highlights include the brilliant design of the copper cross on top of the mausoleum which is hollow – but constructed from thick plates – where a series of subtle air holes on the underside of the cross arms connect through the cross down to a large grate at the top of the dome inside the building. The cross is both a grand finial to the building and an air vent, vital to keeping the building ventilated.

The level of craftwork in the building was amazing. The letter carving is of the highest standard, and that extended to the v-cuts where they marked hidden numbers and instructions on the sarcophagus pieces. When faced with a mass of broken jigsaw puzzle pieces, it's wonderful when a piece which fits two ways, has its top actually labelled TOP.

The stained glass windows proved a particular challenge to the English stained glass heritage specialist, despite decades of experience, he had never had to deal with windows as curved as at Frazer. We learned some English slang when he was working and he ended up spending a lot more time with us than he had planned!

Also of great fun and interest were observing the gargoyles up close. The gargoyles, which are based on French Gothic styles such as at Notre-Dame at Paris and Reims Cathedral, are 'grotesques' carvings which also have functional lead-lined throats to throw off rainwater. When cleaning them out with water, one could hear them gargle... which is the Latin and Old French origin of the word Gargoyle.

The view from the scaffold was particularly great at dawn when we were often joined by a gang of white cockatoos. Later in the day, the top of the scaffold would host a turf war between ravens and magpies, with black cockatoos often visiting the neighbouring pine trees.

Sach Killam

*Stonemason – Heritage Specialist
Metropolitan Memorial Parks*

Helping Hands Happenings



Hello Friends of Rookwood

Well, this year ended in a hurry! The Helping Hands team have completed our regular gardening program for 2024. That said, a few of our folk will be visiting and gardening in the heritage areas of the cemetery on Saturdays over the summer months, though not to a fixed schedule .

In recent weeks we have been clearing several of the graves that we visit on tours in Old Anglican sections 2, 3 and 4. This has resulted in some impressive piles of rubbish in the areas near the Burdekin memorial, and also near the Naval cemetery area in section 4. I would also note that we continuously liaise with the Rookwood grounds team on our activities in these areas, so that we only do work which meets with their approval. We thank them as ever for their gardening advice and help in removing this rubbish.

As usual we tended the roses in the Friends' Rose Garden in the Old Lutheran area and also those in the BB Rose Garden in the Old Anglican. The Friends Rose Garden in particular is a nice cool area to spend some time on a hot summer's day.

As part of the Friends of Rookwood, we were very pleased to attend the Reopening of the Fraser mausoleum on October 22nd, after many years of planning. It was very gratifying to see the results of the work that's been done by the Rookwood stonemasons and grounds team, and the Helping Hands team were pleased to have contributed to this, particularly with cleaning the gutters and removing excess vegetation in the area (which does have a tendency to run amok if not tended regularly).



In the old sections of Rookwood, native kangaroo grasses are found in abundance.



Agapanthus in full bloom near the Serpentine Canal (Photo Loraine Punch)



Irish Strawberry Tree located at the rear of the Frazer Mausoleum.

At this time, I'd like to thank the people in our team who came along on a Saturday during 2024 to enjoy the gardening, banter, sounds of nature and open air of Rookwood. So, thanks to Helen, Gail, Marion, Carolyn, Laurie, Loraine, Cheryl, Luke, Hayley and Ian for their contributions during 2024, and I look forward to seeing them again in 2025. I'm also pleased to report that we had a new starter, Bronnie, in October and I'm hopeful that she'll be back again next year.

The Helping Hands team will resume its regular gardening programme in March of 2025. As ever, we are always looking for people to join us.

So, if you are interested to help us for a couple of hours on the second and fourth Saturdays of the month between March and November (weather permitting), you would be very welcome.

Just bring a few tools (gloves, garden spade, rake, pruning shears) and lots of enthusiasm. Bring a hat, sun lotion, insect repellent, appropriate clothing, sturdy footwear, drinking water, something to sit on and some lunch. The work is as hard as you want to make it, so you can put in as much effort as you wish. Some examples of what we do are removing rubbish and weeds from graves and gardens, weeding, gutter clearing, rose planting and pruning, and a lot of chat.

Our **Gardening Days for the first half of 2025** are as follows, conditions permitting:

Saturday 8th & 22nd March

Saturday 12th & 26th April

Saturday 10th & 24th May

Saturday 14th & 28th June

We meet at 9:30am in the Village Green carpark opposite All Souls Chapel in Hawthorne Ave. If you are running late, ring Geoff on 0419 296 267. As a volunteer, you are not obliged to stay for the whole time or turn up every gardening day.

We break for lunch at midday then work for an hour or two after lunch depending on the weather. At quitting time, we gather for a coffee and enjoy a chance to socialise. If you need any more information or have any suggestions, please contact Geoff Bovard by email: geoff.bovard@gmail.com

Tours

The Irish Tour

Almost a quarter of the convicts sent to Australia came from Ireland. Some political prisoners were sent here without a trial, many others were petty thieves. Immigrants followed, some to escape the ravages of the potato famine or to join the would-be fortune makers on the goldfields, others just seeking a better life for their families. Many of these people and their descendants have left their mark; tradesmen, religious leaders and bushrangers are among their number.

Military (ANZAC) Tour

Hear the tales of those who, many times, put their own lives at risk so we could live a better one. Rookwood has many humble heroes and heroines and they led amazing lives that need to be heard.

Twilight Tours

Held in the cool of the evening, we will tell the stories of such people as Captain Moonlite, Jacob Pitman, Louisa Lawson to name a few. We also tell of a murder that took place in the cemetery. As we stroll along the Serpentine Canal, you will be able to see the restoration and elaborate garden plans that were a feature of the cemetery in the 19th century.

Tours for 2025

Monthly Themed Tours are walking tours and depart from the grassed area near St Michael the Archangel Chapel (on the left, just off Necropolis Drive). Enter the cemetery via the gate at the corner of Victoria and East Streets, Lidcombe

2nd March	10.00am	The Irish Tour
6th April	10.00am	The Military (ANZAC) Tour

TWILIGHT TOURS

BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL – VIA EVENTBRITE

For information phone Julie 0419 986 589

Twilight Tours depart from the small pedestrian gate Eastern – (Near Railway St opposite Davey St)

Meet at 5.15pm – Please Park in East Street

Please DO NOT Park in the Cemetery (as cemetery gates lock at sunset)

16 February 5:15pm to 7:30pm	Bookings can be made by logging on to <i>Eventbrite.com.au</i> and searching for <i>Friends of Rookwood</i> - then select your tour.
16 March 5:15pm to 7:30pm	
16 November 5:15pm to 7:30pm	

Our tours are all separate tours and are subject to change without notice.

For Information phone Julie 0419 986 589

All money raised is used to help with restoration projects within cemetery.

Please bring a friend along and enjoy your tour.

Email: friends_of_rookwood@hotmail.com

Website: www.friendsofrookwoodinc.org.au

Or find us on Facebook