

NFHS Quarterly Report Sandgate Group December 2024.

Sandgate Cemetery Tour Day, Saturday 11 October 2024

The group was delighted to finally undertake, on 11 October 2024, the tour we'd planned for May 2020, but was postponed by Covid, bad weather and various other problems.

Wind, low temperatures and rain met us again but everyone came prepared. 120 guests had registered; between Covid, suspicious symptoms, injury and various other ailments we lost some people, but still had 95 guests. (Compared to the Sandgate Open Day in 2019, when we had 97!)

Society membership participation was great: five volunteer guides, about eight others 'working the day' and nearly 20 taking tours. It's my impression that more members took this tour than had in the past (and it includes a few members whom I've never seen at any Society meeting or other type of event!)

Souvenir kits contained:

- The souvenir booklet with maps, history of Sandgate and information about various stonemasons (the last two were new initiatives)
- A 'common headstone symbols' sheet
- A 'how to' guide for the cemetery's Find a Loved One online facility (written by Jane Ison and will be in the December journal as well)
- Publications pamphlet
- Society brochure and membership application form
- Complimentary copy of a back copy of the journal (from the plentiful supply of old B&W issues)

Another new initiative was a 'lucky door' prize for each tour group: a copy of a recent journal, in this case one with a coloured cover. Our evaluation will include a discussion of this as if it is retained the system needs some streamlining!

MMP had organised for the chapel to be open as well and provided illustrated pamphlets. However it's unclear whether many people did visit, as with our signs blowing over and so much else in the minds of tour guides to impart, we're not sure just how many people were told that it was open! However, Laraine Cross was able to visit and get good photos of the interior to compare with the 'before' shots taken prior to the restoration.

The comments were brilliant and help make the day worthwhile. Over 50 comments were made at the tour or later on the Facebook page. They included:

*Thoroughly enjoyed the tour; enjoyed the stories and insights – we'll recommend to others
Well done – a good length; Very interesting, yet again; Thank you for your hard work putting this occasion together annually*

*Super interesting, thank you for your dedication; Excellent – can't wait for next one
Paul has been a great guide; Bert was great. A lot of research has gone into the tour
Loved the tour; the rain added an extra dimension*

Very interesting and engaging – local stories, knowing surnames and streets

Very well organised and fascinating tour – thank you to the presenter and organiser

Well presented – many 'what if' questions to think about; Thoroughly enjoyed, learned a lot

Great insight into Newcastle history

Very excited to attend today; last time 2019. Margaret gave a wonderful tour. Thank you to the organiser. Will definitely be back.

Thoroughly enjoyed, please put our names on a list for next year.

Very enjoyable. Lots of interesting stories about local people. Thank you for your time.

Well researched, very interesting tour. Excellent research, organisation and presentation

Even those who missed out made comments, including:

Thank you for your generosity and thoughtfulness re souvenir booklet attachment. What a marvellously professional production. Very well researched and presented. The range of pictorial material is a true reflection of your society's commitment and skill. You do the families of these people a great service. [This was a 'special case' member who wasn't able to come at the last minute so received a digital copy of the souvenir book – so impressed that a request was then made for a print copy as well!]

How was this publicised? I wish I'd seen it [this was from someone on the Society Facebook group on which it had been thoroughly advertised!]

Sorry I missed this one; I've been on so many of the tours and they were always so interesting

Naturally we were delighted to be back in 'Sandgate mode'.

We have sent a report to MMP and hope that our current good relationship continues and that we can continue our tours in the future.

It was also appreciated that MMP now has its own branded shelters and could therefore provide us with all the equipment that we needed.

I attended a 'meet the new staff' meeting with MMP this past week and it was very worthwhile. 'Met' staff members, representatives of other groups which carry out tours in other cemeteries; was able to ask questions about the 5-year repair and maintenance cycle (specifically how it's progressing); raised the need for a new permanent sign for the Honeysuckle graves areas (preferably before October 2025); gave some hints based on our tours to another society that raised some difficulties (i.e. using our arrow path markers and numbered ones for each grave – the questioner had marked graves with chalk so he could find them again for his tour). So, a good exchange of ideas; including the good news that the MOU, despite specifying the 2024 tour, does not need to be redone each year, they just need notification of the tour date each year. Financial matters were clarified so there should not be a delay in payment for the booklet production like there was this year. There has been a change to the audio tours system; we are not able to do our own recording, rather just supply scripts which MMP will edit, return for confirmation, then record – their idea is to have the same voice on all audio tours across their cemeteries. We hope to get more detailed criteria for their production.

Margaret Ashford

Sandgate Group Coordinator

Newcastle Family History Society Inc.

December 2024

Photos of the day:

Volunteers ready for the day to commence

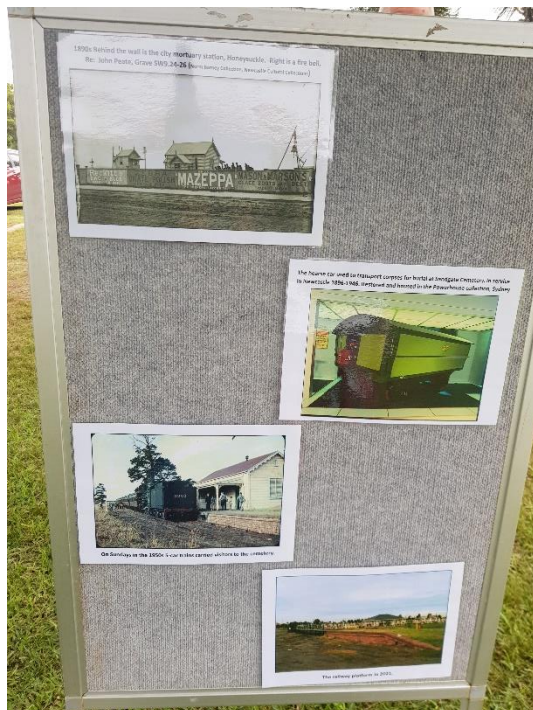
Photo: Mel Woodford



The road was lined with vehicles all day!

Photo: Laraine Cross





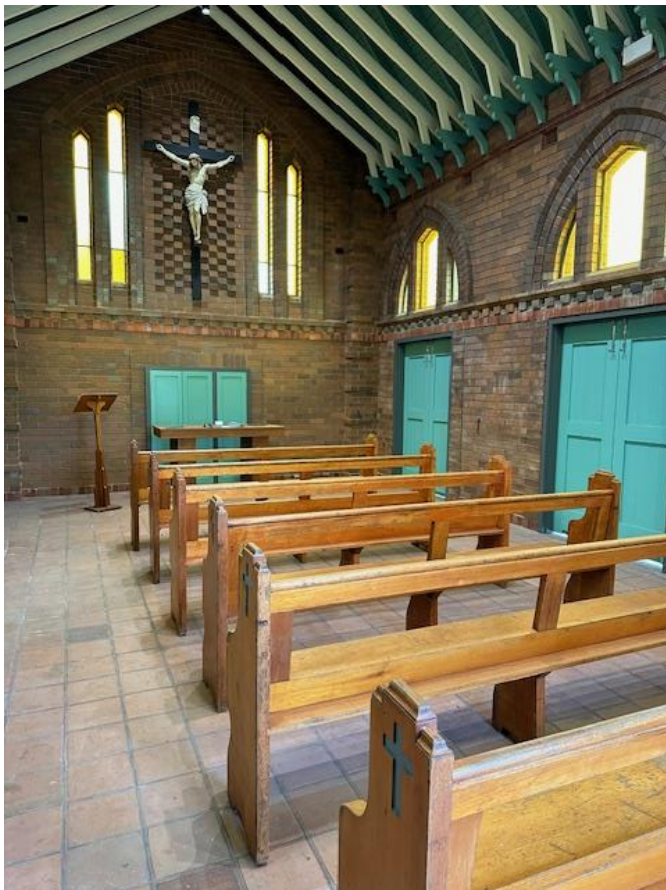
Our photo boards illustrated previous cemeteries, the funeral train and hearse car and other relevant scenes. Photo: Mel Woodford



Umbrellas added some much-needed colour to the day!

Photo: Margaret Ashford

The newly restored Catholic chapel Photos: Laraine Cross





A tour
group about
to move
between
graves

Photo:
Margaret
Ashford



One of our most attentive guests! One could
call it a 'hanger-on' for the tour. It stayed
attached to the surrounds of our grave number
12 for most of the day.

Photo: Paul Kiem



A volunteer tells the story of her grandparents' grave to a tour group

Photos: Laraine Cross

A volunteer explains the photo board to some members of a tour group



