

1918 INFLUENZA PROJECT

KARORI CEMETERY

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2018

COUNTING DOWN

It's only four weeks now until the commemoration event at Karori kicks off at 11.00am on Sunday 18 November. A dedicated team is working away behind the scenes preparing lots of information and promotional materials to spread the word as widely as possible inviting everyone to come along and remember so many people who died in Wellington 100 years ago. We've also developed programmes for guiding visitors around the four main burial areas, and in addition Nigel Isaacs is going to take people around the Jewish section, where five people were buried. Nigel is a direct descendant of Rabbi Van Staveren, first rabbi for the Jewish community in Wellington from 1878 until his death in 1930. Rabbi Van Staveren's youngest son was amongst those who died of influenza. An sixth tour, taking in some of those buried in pre-existing plots in other parts of the cemetery is also under consideration.

WEBSITE

Some changes have been made to the website – the background theme is now cleaner and highlights links more clearly. A "What's New" page has been added – keep an eye on this for any programme changes, or exciting new developments. More than 170 stories have now been uploaded. Site statistics indicate they are being accessed by an average 30 unique visitors every day.

VOLUNTEERING

Thank you to those who have already let me know what you are able to assist with in November – in working bees, as guides for the tours, or to assist in the Mortuary Chapel (Information Kiosk). 10 people have offered to be guides, which is great, but it would be even better if a few more people were able to assist. Guides will be well supported, with some training beforehand, and a comprehensive folder of information to assist them on the day. Please let me know if you are willing to give this activity a go – it's a great way of sharing our stories and meeting interesting people.

Bill Guest has developed a comprehensive traffic management plan and will need 5-8 people to assist him each day for an hour or two. Traffic management will be critical to the success of the day, particularly if we have large numbers arrive at more or less the same time. There will shortly be lots of advice about traffic and parking arrangements uploaded to the website, asking people to use the car park area on Rosehaugh Avenue adjacent to the Main Chapel. There will though be those who want to park alongside the areas of interest in the cemetery itself, and we'll need people at the main gates, which is the only point of entrance and exit during the weekend and is of course on a difficult intersection to assist and guide them.

Email me on flu1918karori@gmail.com and I'll pass your name & contact information on.

WHITE CROSSES

Some of you may have seen the display of white crosses at the Botanic Garden around ANZAC Day this year. We have now arranged to uplift 500 of these to use as plot markers during the commemoration period. A recent trial installation of a dozen or so showed they are both easy to insert and will make a stunning visual display. We won't of course place any on plots of people likely not to be Christian i.e Jewish, Indian or Chinese. Nor are any needed in the Services area, where headstone dates tell the story on their own.

There will be a small working bee on Friday 16 November to "decommission" the crosses by removing the labels used for ANZAC Day. Interestingly when we uplifted some to use for our trial the first one that came to hand was Sergeant Bertram BOOCK, who died at Featherston Camp and was buried in the Jewish section at Karori Cemetery on 12 November! His story is on the website.

WORKING BEES

On Wednesday 24 October a small group from Contact Energy will be working in Gum Gully, removing the litter that has fallen since we worked in the area many months ago, and clearing the "empty" plots. This will make any further cleaning of headstones or graves so much easier during our working bees on 4th and 11th November.

There's no need to let me know if you can come to a working bee – just turn up on the day – we'll be meeting at the Mortuary

Chapel by 2.00pm, and either descending *en masse* on each section in turn, or splitting into smaller groups, each of will focus on one area.

Cemetery management and staff have been working through their programme of preparation for the commemoration days. The Mortuary Chapel has been emptied, the surrounding path cleaned of moss, and the roof is about to be cleaned of lichen growth. Lichen removal from headstones in the Services section is underway and mowing and weed-eating will progress during fine weather days over the next few weeks. In Gum Gully a sturdy safety rail has been installed on the most precipitous steps, which means we can use them during the tours. WCC Parks Ranger service has now come on board to assist with event management planning and to ensure we obtain a permit, and their experience in such matters will be invaluable.

BLACK NOVEMBER

Congratulations to the cast and crew of **BLACK NOVEMBER**, a production directed by Kerryn Palmer and devised by VUW School of English, Film, Theatre and Media Studies students. Those of us who were able to attend thought it was a most creditable presentation of lots of aspects of the epidemic in 1918, and actions to be taken today if another epidemic breaks out. The programme for the production included a paragraph on our project and the website link, which was most appreciated.

Barbara Mulligan, Project Coordinator, 21 October 2018