

Candelo Cemetery

'Burial grounds are important elements of both historical and contemporary landscapes. They represent a central component of the social and physical makeup of a place and for this reason are highly significant in terms of cultural and spiritual values'.

A visit to the Candelo cemetery gives us a glimpse into the lives of previous Candelo community members, including their spiritual beliefs and beliefs in an afterlife.

In the 1830s European squatters moved sheep and cattle onto the lands of the traditional owners of the Yuin nation. An early European community developed on the property Kameruka.

Europeans who came to NSW and Victoria during the gold rushes of the 1850s wanted to buy land from the government to start farming and other rural enterprises. In 1861 the NSW parliament passed the Robertson Land Settlement Acts which allowed men and women with some savings to buy land from the government using a scheme called conditional purchasing. In the years following the passing of this Act, the population began to grow on the land previously on the Kameruka 'run'. Land for the village of Candelo was auctioned by the government in 1865.

Candelo village grew quickly after the land sales. The new land holders applied to the government and a public school was opened in 1868 and the Post Office was established in 1870. By the end of 1871 the buildings in the village were the Public School (a brick building), a store, a public house (hotel), and a blacksmith's and a tinsmith's shop. The Public School had 56 pupils. The villagers built a pedestrian bridge across Candelo Creek so children could safely get to school but this bridge was washed away soon after it was built.

The village grew rapidly over the next 30 years reaching a population of 542 in 1901. The advent of motorised transport during the 1920s and 1930s meant that business moved to the bigger centre of Bega and the village population gradually declined to a low of 248 in 1971.

These changes in population and prosperity are reflected in the cemetery.

With the rapid growth of the village in the 1870s this cemetery was dedicated in 1877. There were separate sections for the Church of England, Roman Catholics, Wesleyans Presbyterians and small sections for independents and Jewish people. A large area was added as a general section in 1928. Trustees for each denomination were responsible for their area of the cemetery. This cemetery shows that Church of England adherents and Roman Catholics were the most numerous of the community.

The older graves are looking quite dirty but please resist the urge to clean them without looking into the process carefully. The grave markers and monuments are the responsibility of family members and descendants.

The National Trust of NSW 'Guidelines for Cemetery Conservation '(web address below) is an excellent guide to what you can and cannot do in a cemetery, considering the legal and ethical obligations of doing any work in a cemetery.

https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/cemetery_conservation_guide.pdf

Also, Heritage NSW site has some useful information and links:

<https://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/applications/state-heritage-items/standard-exemptions/14-burial-sites-and-cemeteries/>

Symbolism of the Headstones

The monuments and plaques use signs and symbols to give us clues to the beliefs and hopes of the deceased, and of the loved ones who designed the monument or plaque. For the older graves the meanings and religious symbols you may see here in Candelo, and at other district cemeteries, can be interpreted using guides such as this one:

<https://blog.billiongraves.com/australian-gravestone-symbols/>

With the increases in digital technology, web sites are being developed that geolocate gravestones and upload details and photographs so people all over the world can find graves for family history and other research. These projects are also great for future researchers as detail is collected which may not be available in the future as monuments degrade over time.

One example is the Billion Graves project. This site includes 413 images and 506 records for Candelo Cemetery.

<https://billiongraves.com/cemetery/Candelo-Cemetery/152327>

You can sign up on this website and add entries from your own family or local cemetery.

A similar website is Findagrave

<https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/2449382>

Further information on Bega Valley cemeteries is available at Bega Library:

Monumental Inscriptions, Known Graves and War Memorials in the Bega Valley Shire, 2010 produced by the Bega Valley Genealogy Society

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