

THE NINNES LONELY GRAVE

and the legacy of Thomas and Maria Nines

No 10

May 2005

With apologies for the lack of a newsletter since the 150th Anniversary –
but we can make up for it with some wonderful news:

NEWS FLASH - NEWS FLASH

Celebrating the 150th – 7th July 2002



COMMEMORATIVE: the oldest descendants of Maria Nines: Max and Murray Wellington.

Maria's legacy lives on



HONOUR: five-year-old Ross Dyer at the gravesite.

IT'S 150 years since Maria Nines died near the Bendigo goldfields, but a graveside ceremony yesterday showed her legacy lives on.

Ms Nines died at what is now the Robin Hill Estate at Maiden Gully on July 7, 1852, while on a pilgrimage with her family from the Burra region in South Australia to the goldfields.

About 100 people yesterday celebrated the 150th anniversary of her death with a ceremony at Ms Nines' grave, which over the years has been called 'the lonely grave,' 'the pioneer grave' and 'the Robin Hill lone grave'.

The grave, surrounded by a brick wall and commemorative headstone, sits alone in the heart of the new Robin Hill Estate development.

It's one of the oldest marked graves in the area.

During the service, the youngest descendants of Ms Nines

planted trees around the grave, while the oldest descendants, Max and Murray Wellington, laid a wreath.

"It's a tremendous day for us; the grave is well cemented and is under heritage listing now," Max Wellington said.

"It was fantastic to see so many people commemorating the 150th anniversary of Maria's death.

"I never thought there would be so many people interested."

Max and Murray are the two oldest surviving great grandchildren of Ms Nines.

She is believed to have 340 descendants throughout Australia.

An interpretive sign was unveiled by mayor Willi Carney at the ceremony. It provides a brief history of Ms Nines and her family. The sign was funded by the City of Greater Bendigo Heritage Advisory Committee.

Thomas Nines' Diary found

Through a member of the Thomas line of the Nines family, we have located Thomas Nines's diary - amongst Joseph Nines's papers in the State Library of South Australia. It took new 'eyes' to realise what it was and it's significance.

Glenys Savage has been working hard transcribing it and finding the answers to many of our questions.

So, we can now relate the story of the grave as told by Thomas Nines himself.

HISTORY

Tales from the grave tell story of Bendigo

Maxwell, left, and Murray Wellington, with historian Edith Lunn, joined about 80 others at a gravesite in Bendigo yesterday. They were there to mark the 150th anniversary of the death of Maria Nines, who died on July 7, 1852. Her headstone notes that Maria, 34, was the wife of Thomas Nines, of Clare, South Australia, and the mother of four children. Mrs Lunn (formerly Mrs Checucco) researched the grave and other aspects of Bendigo history, which has consumed her for more than 40 years and for which she was awarded an Order of Australia medal this year. An article in the *Bendigo Advertiser* in 1959 asked for help in uncovering Maria's tale and exploring local rumours that she either died in childbirth or was killed by Aborigines. Mrs Lunn tracked down the descendants, and yesterday they gathered at the gravesite and unveiled a plaque. Picture: Sandy Scheltema



Bendigo Advertiser Monday 8th July 2002 ↑

The Age Monday 8th July 2002 ⇒

What a day it was! Some sun, not too cold, not too windy – and lots of people. It was wonderful to see so many Bendigo people there, especially residents of the Robin Hill Estate, and neighbours who took an interest.

- ◆ 76 people signed the attendance book
- ◆ 44 people had lunch, and
- ◆ 27 people sent apologies

Amongst those attending, were the most 'senior' descendants, Murray and Max Wellington, great grand-sons of Maria and Thomas Ninnes. Max had previously visited the Grave with his mother, Ada Wellington (nee Chapman) in 1968.

They were so busy being photographed that they almost missed lunch, so it was good to see them featured in **The Age** the next day as well in the **Bendigo Advertiser** (see p1).

Also featuring in the article in the **Bendigo Advertiser** was Ross Dyer, one of the youngest descendants, who with his brother Harrison, planted a commemorative tree on behalf of the descendants (see p1).

The proceedings also included:

- The Mayor, Cr Willi Carney, with words of support for the safe-keeping of local history, unveiled the interpretive sign,
- Edith Lunn outlined her involvement and planted a commemorative tree,
- Helen Dyer recited a lovely prayer, and
- Murray and Max Wellington placed flowers on the Grave.

What Next?

We continue:

- To monitor upkeep of the site by the City of Greater Bendigo
- To investigate options for conservation work on the Grave wall
- To explore the possibility of mounting a re-enactment of the journey.

Planning a visit around 7th July 2005??

Notify Moira Drew - it might be possible to coordinate a gathering.

Extracts from Thomas Ninnes's diary:

1852 March 30 - At night My Wife was confine She never had a better time. Child born and all right in a little time. Sister Mary Thomas present. We had a splendid tent Maria in her sleep being covered very close put out her arms, turned back the clothes and got cold about the arms, breast and neck. She awoke me about 3 o'clock and said she was cold. I got her something hot at once. She improved but never got right as before. ... 6 miles from the Pirenees, and 25 miles from Mt Alexander. We stopped a week

11 May - We moved our tents from Bullock Creek to ... Flat and Creek. It came on a fearful hard rain. Maria got whet. She soon got worse. Palpitations of the Harte came on.

Monday 18 May - I fetched Dr Smitch (?), a German from the Burra. He attended her for inflammation of the Lungs. Paid him for 5 visits £10.0.0. No better the 29 May and fetched Doctor Oakley (?). He attended to the 29th. 7 visits £7.0.0. Medison £5.0.0.

June 29 - I got Dr Moile, a nephew of our family doctor of Penzance to see her. Dr Moile (?) her case incurable he said she had water in the chamber of her Harte and common dropsy. There was no hope whatever of her recovering. Paid him £1.0.0.

July 5 - (recounts more than 1 day) ... She gave up everything for that moment. Prays to the Lord she died 3.30 that day. She lived 3 months and seven days after her confinement. ... Little ?? died at 9 o'clock at night from direah. Jane died at 12 same night from want of Brest nursing. We took boards from the Burra which used to make coffins. I made nice cofins for the children. My wife requested me to make a coffin for her also. It was a ???? trial to me but I managed to make it. Bound it with white cloth and it appeared very nice. John Thomas dug the graves, Nicholas Trehair (?) read the burial service. So ends the history of a good, carefull, affectionate wife. Myself with Mary and Martha was left to mourn her loss.

Newsletter on the www or by email?

This newsletter is available – courtesy of the Cornish Association of Victoria Inc –
<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~caov/program/program.htm> - to receive it by email contact:
moiradrew@connexus.net.au

With continuing thanks to the 'Friends of the Ninnes Grave', in Bendigo and beyond