

# COLVERWELL GRAVES

These two marked graves (with headstones and footstones) are those of Elizabeth and Margaret Colverwell, aged six and five years respectively, who drowned in or near Glen Burn Creek in December 1837. The graves are believed to be the oldest marked graves in the ACT.

Three other family members are believed to be buried here in unmarked graves — the girls' parents Luke and Mary Colverwell and another daughter, Eliza.

## Inscriptions

It is not known who engraved the stones or when. It is possible that two stonemasons were involved because of the differing use of upper and lower cases and fonts. They contain several errors such as the squeezing of the last letters of the girls' family name and the spelling of Elizabeth's name and that of their father's family name.

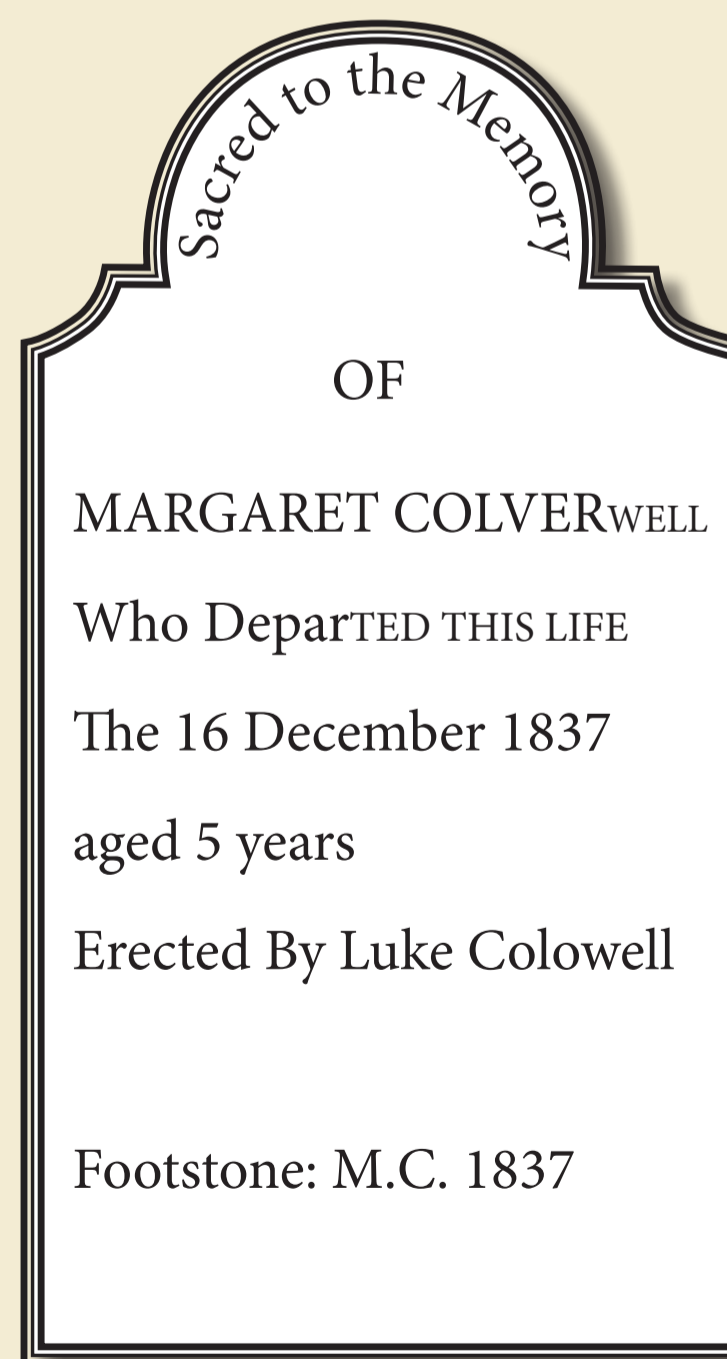
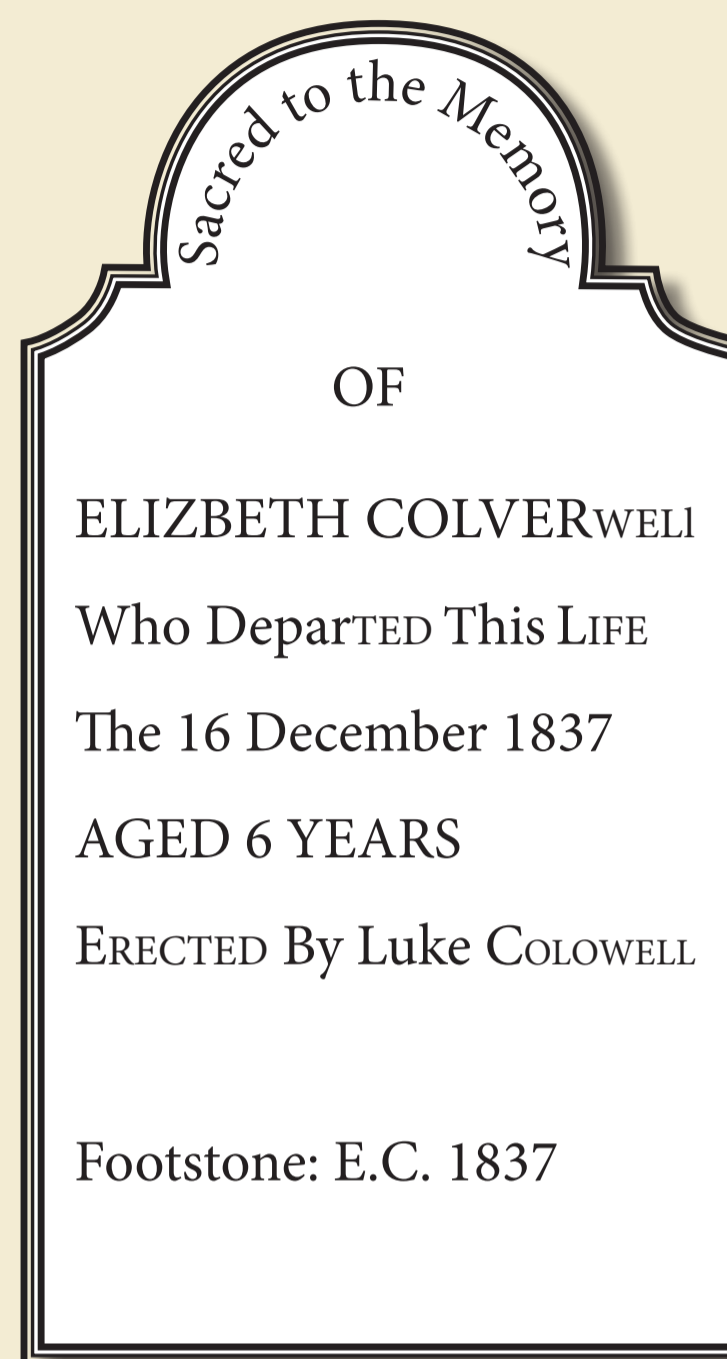
Weathering and lichen encrustations make the inscriptions on the headstones difficult to read.

The best estimate of their wording is illustrated (right).



Colverwell graves in June 2004, prior to restoration. Photo: M Lawrence

*Please respect this site. It is an important part of the early European history of the area and is significant to many ACT and interstate families.*



## Restoration and conservation

The graveyard and the gravestones were restored in 2005. The headstones and footstones were re-erected (the former on aluminium frames), much of the lichen was removed and the fencing was improved. In 2012, the outer fence was replaced by the substantial post and rail fence.

## History

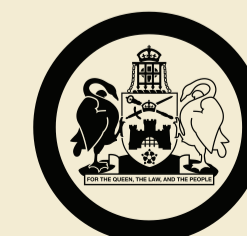
The upper reaches of Glen Burn Creek were known by various names including 'Dirty Swamp' and 'Glenburn'. The area was first settled by Europeans in 1831.

The first settlers were Luke and Mary Colverwell who squatted on the land and built their home on the banks of Glen Burn Creek just to the north-west of where the graves are located.

Both were convicts. Luke (1795-1876) had been sentenced to death in 1810 at the Old Bailey for horse stealing but was transported to Sydney in 1812. He was granted a conditional pardon in 1821. He met Mary Danahy (born 1799; date of death unknown), an Irish convict who had arrived in Sydney in 1828, at Gundaroo where both were working.

They married in 1831 and in the same year settled at 'Dirty Swamp'. They had six children: Elizabeth (1831-1837), Margaret (1832-1837), Eliza (1835-1857), Mary (1836-1920), Jane (1839-1917) and Luke (1841-1896). All were probably born at 'Dirty Swamp'.

Luke Colverwell became a large landholder. In 1840, he purchased the land he originally squatted on and, by the mid 1800s, he owned approximately 5,000 acres (more than 2,000 hectares) at Glenburn and across the other side of the Molonglo River at Burbong.



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