

### MEMORIAL CARDS

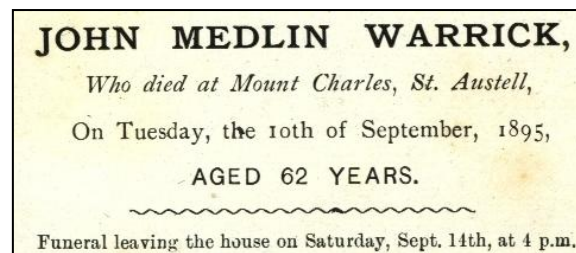
(Also known as Funeral Cards, Mourning Cards, In Memoriam Cards and Remembrance Cards)

These often melancholy little cards became popular from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century but are, unfortunately, small and ephemeral, thus frequently lost, damaged or discarded. If saved, they are possibly to be found in family bibles, photo albums or scrap books. They can be an invaluable resource for genealogists.

As their name suggests, memorial cards were produced in remembrance of a person who had recently died. The information included can generally be relied upon as being quite accurate, as it was supplied by close family or friends shortly after the death, and can provide us with usually reliable information after all those who knew the deceased have also passed on.

Memorial and Funeral cards can differ slightly due to their purpose/requirements –

Funeral cards were distributed prior to the funeral, serving as an invitation to family and friends to attend, and giving details of the arrangements. Basic information included the name and date of death of the deceased, date, time and place of the funeral service and burial, often the names of close family, and attending clergy and pallbearers. As time was short, the family could make their choice from a range of pre-printed cards usually available from undertakers and stationers, often illustrated with a funerary motif and verse, the details of the particular funeral then being added.

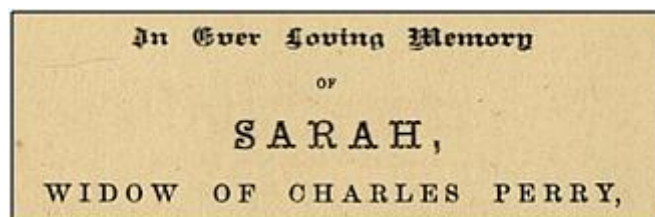


*Funeral Card - fragment from MIDAS Item 05/002559.1*

Memorial cards, on the other hand, were distributed in remembrance of the deceased, and were often not printed until some time after the death.

The wording and information included could therefore be given much more consideration and, on some, a considerable amount of detail about the deceased may be recorded. As well as direct family, more distant relationships and friends can be included, as well as date and place of birth, occupation/s, war and community service, previous places of residence etc. Many also include photographs. By following these leads, new insights may be gained into the family's history and their place in the local community, or gaps filled and puzzles solved.

As usual it is the men who get the most attention... unfortunately a woman may only be referred to only as Mrs So and So, with more information provided about her husband than herself.



*A fragment from MIDAS Item 04/012827.1*

## Society of Australian Genealogists



*Or even less information in this fragment from MIDAS 04/018926*

Memorial cards are small, the single or folded card usually measuring approximately 8 x 5.5 cm. Single cards might be printed on front and or verso, while the folded style has usually a decorative funerary motif on the front, with a verse on the back. References to Peace, Sleep, Rest, or the vacant space left by the passing of the deceased are common. Inside is the wording chosen to celebrate the life, and mourn the death of the departed. Some are black with gold or silver lettering, or a more simple embossed white card with a black border.

Again many cards were mass produced, the family choosing whichever design and verse appealed to them, and the details of the deceased and family were added. More personalised or elaborate cards could be commissioned, with images and verses of choice.



*from a flyer for the Memorial Card Engraving and General Printing Company  
MIDAS Item 04/015053.*



*a fragment from a beautifully detailed card - MIDAS Item 4/1748.3*

Indications of country of origin or heritage and other affiliations may be expressed by the use of, for example, the English rose, Scottish thistle, Irish shamrock, Russian Orthodox cross, Masonic or occupational symbolism.

Modern memorial cards are generally less elaborate than those of earlier years, but are still valuable sources of genealogical information for future family historians, so should be kept and stored in a safe environment.

The printing of memorial cards has declined since the introduction of computer technology. Relatives of the deceased are much more likely to produce their own memorial stationery often featuring several photos of the deceased, a poem or a written tribute.

Here is our final example from 2002.



*a fragment from MIDAS Item 04/026411 which contains genealogical information on the verso*