



JOHN LUKE | THE TIMES

RICHARD HAMMERSMITH, a former Hobart cop, is a caretaker of the Hobart Cemetery, which was established in 1859. Some of Hobart's oldest families are buried at the cemetery, including the city's founder, George Earle. Hammersmith said he asked to take care of the cemetery in 1999 after he noticed crooked headstones and overgrown grass. "It's my home away from home," he said.

Showing his respect

Former cop takes care of Hobart Cemetery

BY JUSTIN POST

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Richard Hammersmith finds life in death.

Whether adjusting headstones or comforting a grieving husband or wife, the former city police sergeant said his job as Hobart Cemetery caretaker is a labor of love.

"I love this place," he said one recent morning while brushing a clump of fresh snow from a headstone. "It's my home away

from home. There is just so much history here."

Hammersmith, 57, first visited the cemetery in 1999 when his mother-in-law, Jean Smith, died. He said he was disturbed to find overgrown grass and crooked headstones in a place where he expected to find comfort in his surroundings.

"It was terrible," he said. "If you're going to take care of a place like this you have to show it some respect. They may be dead and gone, but they still deserve some respect."

Hammersmith went to Hobart Mayor Linda Buzinec to express his concerns and asked whether he and his son-in-law, Chris Wagner, could take care of the place as a part-time job during summer months.

With the city's approval, Hammersmith set out with a push mower and began chipping away at a lengthy chore list. About \$10,000 alone was spent on trimming and pruning the hulking trees dotting the 7-acre cemetery.

See **RESPECT, B9**

