

Friends of Soldiers Memorial Avenue Inc.

Newsletter Issue 41: January 2009

Highlights:

- Remembrance Day Dedications and Public Displays



Dates to remember:

- February 14th - An Evening with Professor Bruce Scates
- February 15th - Dedications



President's Report

I trust that all members had a wonderful Christmas and a relaxing break over the summer (although it has been a bit chilly!). Those of you who attended the dedications and public displays for Remembrance Day in November, will, I am sure, agree with me that these events were very popular and for the dedications displayed the true spirit of what we are trying to achieve, helping families make connections with their past as well as helping all Tasmanians understand the sacrifice made by so many in the Great War. Thanks to all those on the committee and other friends who helped make these events work so well.

On Remembrance Day, I attended the service at the Cenotaph and this year was a very special occasion. The RSL arranged for a number of schools to be involved carrying unit banners as well as some delightful choirs. The musical arrangements performed by the Army Band Tasmania were innovative and very moving. It was a wonderful service and I encourage all members to attend this year's service. Congratulations to the RSL for their organisation of this special day.

As we move into 2009, FOSMA looks forward to more dedications in February and November as well as the planting of replacement trees during autumn/winter with a formal "unveiling" in August, and the Anzac Week commemorations. I hope that all members will find the time to attend one or more of these events.

John Wadsley

An Evening with Professor Bruce Scates

As a precursor to the dedications on Sunday 15th February 2009, we are pleased to announce that Professor Bruce Scates has accepted our invitation to give a presentation on "**Journeys to Gallipoli and beyond**". Professor Scates holds the Chair of History and Australian Studies at Monash University. He has written extensively on war, memory and commemoration, most notably *Return to Gallipoli: Walking the Battlefields of the Great War*. He is very interested in meeting people who have travelled to battlefields and how families have remembered loved ones lost in war.

Descendants of men on the Avenue are strongly encouraged to attend and share their family's stories of loss and remembrance with Bruce. It is also hoped to have some entertainment with a quartet from the "Wellingtones".

This event will be held on **Saturday 14th February 2009 from 5.30 pm to 8.00 pm, at the Domain Athletics Centre, Queens Domain, Hobart.**

Food and drinks will be provided. **Cost is \$20 per head for FOSMA members, \$25 others.** You must book to attend. To reserve a place, please contact Andrea Gerrard on 6228 0543 by February 9th at the latest.

February 15th Dedications

The next dedications ceremony is planned for Sunday 15th February 2009, commencing at 11 am. The plaques have been funded by our major corporate sponsor, the Tassal Group Ltd and a grant from the State Government. All are invited to a morning tea on the Avenue, following the main ceremony (weather permitting).

The dedications ceremony will be located approximately 300m north of the TCA Ground. Parking will be available at the carpark on the northern side of the TCA Ground. Alternatively you can park at Grasslands Gully on Carriage Drive. If you know of anyone who is related to these soldiers, encourage them to come along and/or contact FOSMA. The list of dedications is as follows:

114	Pte Owen Stanley Tolman	26th Bn	Died of Wounds 10/8/1916
369	Pte Arthur Bonser	40th Bn	Killed in Action 28/03/1918
371	Pte James George Frederick Ware	4th Machine Gun Coy	Died of Wounds 12/04/1917
374	Spr Alan Douglas McNeill	1st Field Coy Eng	Killed in Action 26/03/1918
375	Pte Harry George Pearson	12th Bn	Killed in Action 15/04/1917
376	Pte Kenneth Douglas Mills	49th Bn	Killed in Action 10/04/1918
377	Pte Frank Fry	7th Bn	Killed in Action 20/09/1917
378	2/Lt Alfred Charles Thurstans	40th Bn	Killed in Action 05/04/1918
379	Cpl Norman Hanslow (Enslow)	2nd Light Horse	Died of Wounds 22/04/1917
380	Cpl William Sowby	52nd Bn	Died of Wounds 19/04/1918
382	Pte Bertram Stephen Dove	40th Bn	Killed in Action 09/04/1918
383	L/Cpl Thomas Andrew Ahearne	40th Bn	Killed in Action 13/05/1917
384	Pte James Bruce Thompson	49th Bn	Killed in Action 07/06/1917
385	Pte Charles H Wilson	12th Bn	Killed in Action 23/04/1918
386	Lt George William Best	3rd Sqn, AFC	Killed in Action 12/04/1918
387	Sgt William Oakford Jeffrey MM, C de G	13th Bde AFA	Killed in Action 10/08/1918
388	Gnr John Edward Flanagan	8th Bde AFA	Killed in Action 24/04/1918
389	Sgt Wyn(Fred) Howard Cleary MM	1st Bde AFA	Died of Wounds 23/04/1918
390	Pte Henry Kirkham King	9th Bn	Died of Wounds 24/04/1918
392	Gnr Ahlbare Hurst Howell	36th Hvy Arty Gp	Died of Wounds 25/04/1918
394	2/Lt Francis Walter Reid	54th Bn	Died of Gas Poisoning 24/04/1918
395	Pte John William Harrison	26th Bn	Killed in Action 29/07/1916
402	Pte George Arthur Wood	40th Bn	Killed in Action 26/04/1918
484	Pte Constant Stanley Dalco	40th Bn	Died of Wounds 11/6/1918

Works on the Avenue



Over the next few months, benches will begin to appear along the main Avenue adding to the 4 already in place around the Soldiers Memorial Oval. These seats have been funded by our major sponsor the Tassal Group Ltd. All the benches bear a small plaque indicating the Tassal Group Ltd donation.

The stone work at the head of the stairs linking the main Avenue with the Oval was re-laid just before Christmas to produce a much better firmer and more stable platform for walkers. Dave Mason (formerly Green Corps coordinator on the Oval restoration) and Jerem

Cowley, both from Civic Solutions undertook the work and have done a fine job. Also the new trees around the Oval received their first long summer drink care of Civic Solutions and HCC.

Pte John Henry (Jack) Lewis, 12th Battalion (Tree #326) prepared by John Trethewey

The *Weekly Courier* and its southern counterpart the *Tasmanian Mail* followed Tasmania's contribution to the war effort with articles and pictures of those who had enlisted or paid the ultimate sacrifice. News relating to Tasmanian soldiers continued to be carried by the papers for some time after the end of the Great War as indicated by the following article from the *Weekly Courier* dated 16th January, 1919 which reported on a welcome home celebration that had taken place five days earlier.

"Anzacs and other returned soldiers were given a hearty welcome last week. The holidays being over, the cars went to meet the men at Glenorchy, where the arch was redecorated, and the Warden spoke welcoming words. Many gifts of fruit were offered to the returned men. The W.A.A.C.'s under the leadership of Mrs. J. A. Johnson and Mrs Wishart Smith had redecorated with gay lettering, greenery and flowers the arch near Lyndhurst. Along the route were flags and decorations, with the big arch near the Post Office done with red, white and blue, surmounted by the gigantic kangaroo that can be seen from far up Elizabeth Street. The kilties and the massed bands led the procession in the city, and with some of the soldiers and nurses in the first car was 'The Lady of the Flag' with her Union Jack.



The Peace Archway

His Excellency and Lady Newdegate, the Mayor and Mayoress, Colonel Wanliss, Lieut.-Col. Young and others were on the temporary platform. As usual, the officers and members of the V.A.D. lined the steps and showered the soldiers and munitions workers with rose leaves as they passed up to the platform. The male choir sang in their honour, and, after the ceremony, all present joined in singing 'Australia Will Be There.' His Excellency and the Mayor, also Col. Young addressed the men. A pathetic note of the proceedings was the presentation by His Excellency of a Military Medal – awarded to the late Private J. H. Lewis [SMA Tree # 326] to his mother, who was present on the platform.

Some of the soldiers had the laurel wreaths that had been given them around their hats and one or two carried their children on to the platform with them. Captain E. D. Cummings in responding on behalf of the men, said smilingly that 'they were all jolly glad to be back home' and indeed it seemed so. Very hearty were the greetings given by their comrades who had returned earlier, and were at the Town Hall to join in the welcome. The members of the Soldier's Fathers Association were standing near the place where the cars drew up, and gave each man a hearty cheer as he arrived on the scene, and with his relatives walked between the guard of honour of V.A.D.'s to where the Governor and the Mayor waited to greet him.

Emmeline Lewis, mother of #6578 Pte John Henry Lewis had chosen to receive her son's Military Medal at the next suitable public occasion and it appears that the local authorities had chosen this occasion. As pathetic as this sight may have seemed to the reporter, it gave Emmeline public recognition for her son's bravery and that he had given his life for his country.

In September 1916 John Henry Lewis convinced his parents to give their permission for him to enlist in the First A.I.F. Armed with their written consent he wasted no time in enlisting attending the local recruiting office the same day. This was his second effort at enlisting; on the first attempt he had been rejected due to failing the chest measurement test, but as enlistment numbers dropped so too were the required standards for height, chest measurement etc.

Jack was a 19 year old single factory hand from 55 D'Arcy Street, Hobart, the youngest son of Thomas and Emmeline. Having failed once already Jack was determined to prove himself by

embracing the rigors of real soldiering life. Following the discipline and inculcation of military training at Claremont Army Camp and later at Durrington, England, Lewis joined the 12th Battalion in France on 4th May 1917 perhaps even taking part in the final phase of the Bullecourt battle.



**Pte Jack Henry Lewis.
Picture taken at Hobart
prior to embarkation in
October 1916.**

After a four month break the 3rd Brigade moved into the lines at Polygon Wood, Belgium where Jack distinguished himself in the heat of battle by being awarded the Military Medal for bravery in the field. His recommendation read *'During the attack at Polygon Wood, east of Ypres on 20/21st September, 1917, Pte. Lewis acted as company runner throughout the action and showed great courage in carrying messages under heavy shell fire. He also volunteered to guide and assist stretcher bearers in carrying wounded through intense enemy barrage fire. Later, he maintained observation from an important observation post which was being very heavily shelled.'*

In less than a fortnight the 12th were called back into the line, where Jack unfortunately joined the ranks of the Glorious Dead. The 12th Battalion had been holding the line after the 4th October stunt in Ypres Sector. Belying his youthfulness and slight stature Pte Jack Lewis became a trusted company runner taking messages between the front line and company headquarters as well as leading men and material. At the same time he was employed as a batman firstly to Lieut. Butler and then for Lieut. Ernest Facy. On that fateful day Jack was sent on an errand from Westhoek Ridge by Lieut. Facy to bring a party with material up to the front line. Runners were often used for this purpose as it was easy for a party to lose their way and end up in German lines

In Lewis's Australian Red Cross Society Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau File is an account given by Pte. R. J. Seymour of the 12th Battalion – *'The last I saw of Lewis, he was going as guide for the relief party. This was at West Hoek [sic] ridge between Zonnebeke and Passchendaele ridge. My mate Craig was with a rationing party that was coming in and says that he passed Lewis with another party composed of signallers. Lewis and his party took cover in a sap from the barrage. Eventually that sap was blown to pieces by the intense shelling and there is no doubt that Lewis perished with the rest. The body is not likely to be recovered. He was quite young – 17. I have known him since he was a baby and also his family who reside in Hobart Tasmania ...*

It was common practice for soldiers to be buried in the field, just out of the line, but these graves were vulnerable to shelling and many bodies that had been given a decent burial were lost this way. Jack Lewis was buried alongside two other members of the 12th Battalion, but shelling soon damaged the grave. A new cross was erected over the graves with his name and that of Lt. W. H. E. Hale and Cpl P. C. Whelan. This information doesn't seem to have been passed onto Headquarters and Jack was declared 'missing in action'. Anxious letters of enquiry soon ensued from his loving family, but all to no avail, Jack was gone. Finally in April, 1918 a Court of Enquiry was convened and based on the evidence it was determined that Jack Lewis had been killed in action and his family finally had an answer to their many enquiries. It is likely that the grave was again damaged by shelling and its exact location never found again. Jack's name appears on the Menin Gate as one of the many thousands missing in action with no known grave.

Like so many other grief stricken parents, Thomas and Emmeline Lewis sought to embrace the one meaningful type of commemoration available to them at the time by planting a living memorial tree to honour their son's memory at the Soldiers Memorial Avenue on Hobart's Domain. Tree No. 326 commemorates the sacrifice of John Henry Lewis, 12th Battalion.

Remembrance Day Dedications and Public Display

Our November events were well attended, supported by fine weather yet again. The following photos provide some indication of the day's activities. As members may have noticed we had excellent media coverage for the events, with our first page one "pin up" !!!! It was particularly pleasing to see so many family groups attend on the day, and especially to share some of their own stories. We are very grateful for the time given by the Lord Mayor of Hobart, who delivered the main dedication speech on the day.



The Lord Mayor Ald Rob Valentine delivering his speech



The crowd builds in anticipation



Part of Peter Pickering's comprehensive Light Horse Display



The entrance to the public display at the Gunpowder Magazine

Many thanks to Duncan Kerr MP SC, Federal Member for Denison and his staff for photocopying this newsletter
