

Friends of Soldiers Memorial Avenue Inc.

Newsletter Issue 46: November 2009

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Highlights:

- Great War Avenues in Canada
- Norman Eric Beard

Dates to remember:

- Sunday November 8 – Placing Poppies, installing plaques and numbers
- Wednesday November 11 – Remembrance Day Dedications

Poppy Day Working Bee Sunday November 8th

On Sunday November 8th, we will be placing the poppies at the trees in preparation for Remembrance Day. This year the poppies will be on small sticks and placed by the plinths. This will make it easier to later clear discoloured poppies and ensure no damage to the fast growing foliage on the newly planted trees from 2008 and 2009. Members of the Committee will also be placing the plaques for dedication and more of the number plates. And where did all the poppies come from? The ever-industrious hands of Helen Hartley (#84 Pte George Copcutt) who has laboured long and hard to create 500 poppies for us to place,

We would love to see as many as possible join us for this important act of remembrance. Meet at the car park at the northern end of the TCA ground from 10am.

Remembrance Day Wednesday November 11th

The dedication of plaques on Remembrance Day will be occurring near tree #190; 200m south of T.C.A. north entrance. Our patron His Excellency, Peter Underwood AC, Governor of Tasmania will lead the dedications. Mr Allan McCallum, Chair of the Tassal Group Ltd, our major supporter, will also join us. Students from Sacred Heart College, including a choral group, and Mt Stuart Primary will also be there. The event begins at 9am sharp. Families dedicating plaques will be contacted individually during the preceding week.

New Numbers

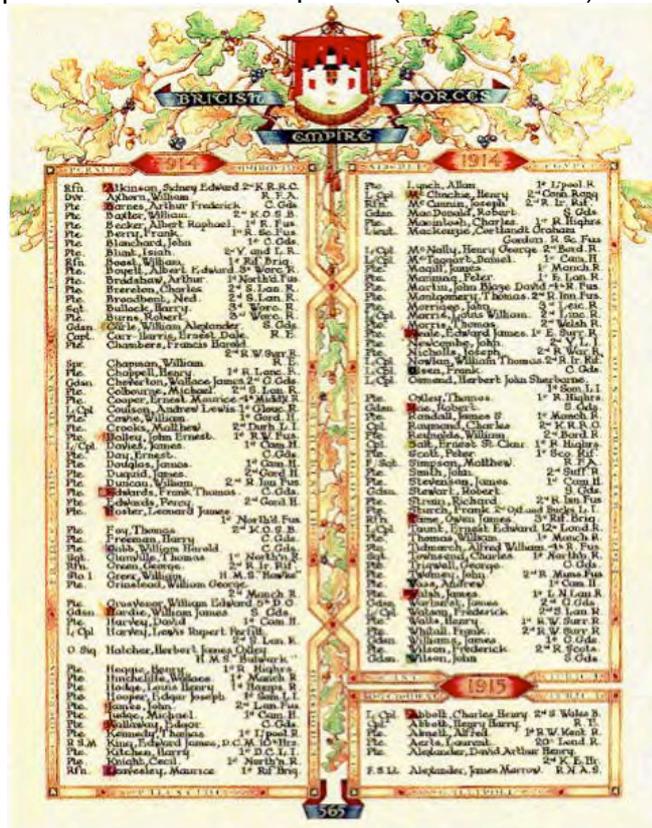


For those of you wondering just what these new number plates look like – here is a picture. As you can see, they are quite large, bronze and made in the style of the plaques. The total cost of numbering the Avenue is over \$21,000 plus glue and time. Thanks go to Clinton Crook at Retlas Plaques, for a fine job and a good price, and Mike Wilkie as ever for his practical suggestions and unfussed approach in getting them on the plinths, guiding the rest of us (an all thumbs crew) in what needs to be done. Chris Oakes is similarly unfussed in his approach and will always tell us when it is time for a break and a beer. For the beer we give thanks to the Globe Group. So next time you wander the Avenue if you are looking for someone in particular, it will be easier.

Avenues around the world: Canada

As noted in the last issue, avenues commemorating the fallen of the Great War exist in many countries. The movement to plant trees seems to have been strongest in English speaking countries but was certainly not restricted to them.

As noted in FOSMA7 Canada also had its avenues planted soon after the Great War. The best known is the Next-of-Kin Memorial Avenue in Saskatoon in Saskatchewan. This avenue survives as it forms part of the land now controlled by the local Council and cemetery trust. It has been added to over the years with trees planted for later servicemen and servicewomen and also includes 'unit' trees – trees planted to commemorate particular units and occupations (such as firemen).



In Canada the avenues were initially called Roads of Remembrance (following the UK example). Canada is also home to one of the great commemorative artefacts of the Great War the “Books of Remembrance” (see left) listing the names of all Canadian servicemen and women who died during or just after the war. In all it seems there were 7 main ‘Roads of Remembrance’.

Future generations of Canadians will be reminded," noted the Canadian Municipal Journal in 1922, "of the part that Canada played in the world's fight for democracy ... not in ornate stone but in nature's noblest gift to her people – the gift of trees"¹

Victoria and Saanich in British Columbia, Calgary, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Montreal, Thunder Bay all had avenues under one name or another.

It seems that in Canada the plantings reflected two images. The first was as a reminder of the avenues of France – the elms of Winnipeg were intended as “a far-off reminder of the long straight tree-lined roads of France down which young men from (the college) had marched in their rendezvous with death”.² This sentiment was echoed in Saskatoon and Victoria.³ Winnipeg’s avenue never had individual tree markers

but the stone plinth at right lists the name of the 52 men commemorated by the Avenue. (See right)

In recent years the City of Calgary has begun the process of revitalising and restoring its Memorial Drive, as it became known. This was a huge planting with 3,278 poplars planted between 1922 and 1928. Many of the trees were donated and small discs were placed in front carrying the year of planting, the donor’s name and an ID number. The Tree Planting Committee recorded the full details of soldiers, trees and donors in a register – alas this went to storage in the 1960s and has not been seen since!



¹ Lanken, Dane ‘Memory Lanes – Canada’s Roads of Remembrance’ *Canadian Geographic* Nov1, 1997

² Fulton, G ‘Roads of Remembrance’ *Manitoba History* 31, Spring 1996

³ Fulton, G *ibid*

This restoration is a massive challenge with the avenue stretching for 9.5 kilometres through parks with parts being a major thoroughfare.⁴ In 2001, City of Calgary Parks began cloning the remaining poplars as the avenue reached the end of its life cycle producing over 1500 new trees.

The project has now moved on – some trees are being removed and replaced with a mix of Russian Mountain Ash and Schubert Chokeberry along the north side of the river and poplars on the south. Along the river a pilot ‘commemorative node’ is being built to serve as a focus for reflection and information about the trees, the men and women commemorated and the war.

Alas, most of the other Canadian avenue have disappeared or have been so compromised that they remain only in name. Montreal’s Road of Remembrance on Sherbrooke St has lost most of its trees and all plaques, Those in Thunder Bay (Ontario) have disappeared due to pressure of commerce and progress while much of the Winnipeg avenue succumbed to disease. The Victoria/Saanich avenue was never completed and the few plaques all disappeared.⁵

Even in Canada the actual *number* of original avenues has succumbed to time – in most of the literature little is said about another Ontario avenue, in Orillia. A retired soldier, Mike Mulvihill whose son served in Afghanistan, researched the Orillia Avenue. This was planted in 1922. The local Council resolved

Whereas it is proposed to designate as Memorial Avenue that section of the new provincial highway entering Orillia which lies between the Ontario Hospital and the Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital, in honour of the memory of the heroes from our town and township who fell in the Great War, and whereas such Memorial Hospital, just built and opened for the relief of our sick, and afflicted citizens, and returned soldiers, and erected with voluntary subscriptions donated in memory of our honoured dead, appeals to us as a suitable monument to mark the northerly end of such Memorial Avenue, while the great provincial hospital serving nobly the needs of those mentally weak is an equally suitable monument to mark the southerly end of such Memorial Avenue.

And whereas provision has been made to plant a row of memorial trees on one side of this avenue, and for special electric lighting on the other side, both to extend from one great hospital to the other.⁶

When Mike began his research, he believed, like many others, that the Memorial Avenue was so named due to the fact that it began at the Memorial Hospital – he was surprised and humbled to find it was all part of the same package. He is now trying to get some decent signage to make people aware that this was a ‘highway of heroes’.⁷



One interesting discovery is that the Soldiers and Sailors Mothers and Wives Association was active in Canada as well as Australia.

The local association was a strong supporter of Hobart’s Soldiers Memorial Avenue from its inception keeping up a steady string of requests and demands to the Hobart City Council and Reserves Committee through the 1920s and 30s. It is unknown how it developed or what connections existed with its international equivalents.

South Vancouver Soldiers and Sailors Mothers and Wives Association refreshment tent - 1917
City of Vancouver Archives, item # Mil P36

⁴ *Memorial Drive – Landscape of Memory Design Development Plan 2005* City of Calgary 2005

⁵ Fulton, G *ibid*

⁶ <http://www.orilliapacket.com/ArticleDisplay.aspx?e=1699809&auth=>

⁷ *idem*

If you like music and want a sense of Canada, listen to K D Lang *Hymns of the 49th Parallel* – all songs are by Canadian song writers - Neil Young, Gordon Lightfoot, Leonard Cohen and Joni Mitchell. Great thoughtful songs sung with great voice.

Norman Eric Beard

One of the plaques to be dedicated on Remembrance Day is for Norman Eric Beard. Norman has trees on both the Soldiers Memorial Avenue in Hobart (requested by his mother) and at Jericho, due to his local family connections. His name appears on memorials at Melton Mowbray, Green Ponds, Kempton and in the Hobart Town Hall. This underlines the importance of family connections in the recognition of service and sacrifice.

The following information has been supplied by Stephanie Burbury of Jericho, and comes from the *Oatlands District Historical Society's Chronicle No. 4*

Beard, Norman Eric (4287) was born at Green Ponds on 6.7.1893, the son of James and Helen Beard. He was a farmhand at "Northumbria" prior to joining the 12th Bn. as a Private on 27 September 1915. He was given a farewell in the Jericho Hall, along with Tom Burbury, and embarked on 5 January 1916 per His Majesty's Australian Transport Afric. Referees were Mrs. Percy Harrisson and Mrs. George Hodgson. His father was deceased at the time he enlisted, and his mother, Helen, was named as next of kin. [By this time she was living in Regent St in Sandy Bay].

He sent the following post card to Mrs. Burbury of Park Farm:



France
Jan 6-1-17
Dear Mrs Burbury,

Just a card In answer to your most welcome Xmas card which I received yesterday 5 January 17 It was awfully [sic] kind of you and the Family to think of me so far it is my first card from Jericho remember me to the H.P. Harrissons and tell Mrs Percy [Harrisson] I have sent her a small packet by this mail. I haven't saw Tom [Burbury] so far if you do write again as I hope you do send me his address and I will write to him we are often in dug outs close to the batteries and I might have the chance of seeing him. Well I wonder how much longer the war will last Mrs. Burbury if it goes through this Summer it will be very fierce over here there will be a lot of us have to stay in France and push up flowers I guess. With kind regards to your family and the Harrissons,

Yours Sincerely
N. Beard

As he sadly predicted, he was killed exactly three months later on 6 April 1917 at Boursies, France, and was one of the many who remained behind to "push up flowers". He has no known grave.



Above: Norman Eric Beard K.I.A. Photo: M. Johnson

Right: plaque for Norman on the Jericho Avenue.

Fundraisers

In the lead up to Christmas we are doing some fundraising. Firstly there are souvenirs – *cloth badges* based on the design of the pin back badge from 1918. These cost \$10 and can be sewn on to wind cheaters and the like, among other things.

We are also offering *tree souvenirs* – these are made from limb wood from tree pruning on the Avenue. They are coated with a resin and carry the 1918 badge.

The size varies due to the size of the limb - no surprises there! On larger cuts, it is possible to fix name plates as in the example below. Smaller rounds have been fitted with a wooden prop so they stay upright.

The cost for the prepared timber is \$10 for a small piece and \$15 for a larger item. This does not include any engraving – you will have to organise this yourself.



These can be great as mementoes and also another way of creating a legacy within the family to remind a later generation of the existence of a tree on the Avenue for an ancestor.

Cloth Badges - \$10 Wooden Rounds - \$10 or \$15.

Postage and handling - \$2.50.

All orders phone to 6234 4396, write to GPO Box 1867 Hobart TAS 7001 or email to soldiersmemave@netspace.net.au

Christmas Wine Offer

We are again running our wine offer through Prospect Wines. Simply remove the last page of the newsletter and send your order form to

FOSMA Wine Offer c/o 11 Franklin St, West Hobart TAS 7000.

Note all orders should be received by **Tuesday November 24**. Delivery will take 2-3 weeks and any enquiry should be made to FOSMA.

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

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