



Highlights:

- Avenues in New Zealand, New Signs for the Avenue

Dates to remember:

- Sunday April 18– Working Bee
- Sunday April 25 – Anzac Day – Exhibition & BBQ at the Gunpowder Magazine

Working Bees –April 18 and May 16

Our next working bee is on April 18 and we have c200 number plates prepared for gluing. Other jobs that need doing are photographing plaques on the Avenue (for loading onto the website and to provide a reference record for long-term storage) – the camera will be provided. If you can help with either of these tasks, come along to the TCA north car park at 10am. IF you cannot come along till later there will be a sign near our container in the TCA depot directing you to where we all are.

Review of 3 August 2010 event

We are disappointed to inform you all that the dedication of plaques and completion of the redevelopment of the Soldiers Memorial Oval **will not** now occur for August 2010.

We are however pleased to inform you all that this delay is the result by a rethink about what is needed at the Oval, a review of facilities and parking and the realisation that more landscaping is required than perhaps first thought. The HCC is currently reviewing the Domain Management Plan and this too has played its part. The upshot is that more funds will be committed to a serious redevelopment of all aspects of the Soldiers Memorial Oval.

This however does mean that there is no development on the original Avenue. 122 trees will be available for planting. The HCC arborist will soon be conducting tree assessments for trees below the TCA ground to the southern end of the Avenue. The number of trees available should be quite enough to plant trees to replace the dead and missing as well as those deemed unlikely to survive in reasonable health for another 10 years. These replacements will mean full, uninterrupted rows of trees from Aberdeen St to the Soldiers Memorial Oval and also a run of trees the full length of the Avenue. The next newsletter will contain a list of trees to be planted and trees slated for replacement. As in 2009, no tree will be removed without the permission of any family contactable by FOSMA and families will have the option to salvage the timber.

Monitoring Tree Health

Those of you who have recently walked the Avenue, including the last few months, will have noticed that some of the new trees seemed to struggle with signs of considerable needle death on a few – they looked totally denuded.

Firstly it is worth pointing out that the trees have been monitored by the HCC throughout spring and summer. Four trees at the Soldiers Memorial Oval were sprayed for spider mite and these have largely revived with a replacement of growing needles by the end of summer. A few others seemed to have suffered from excess water, a rare occurrence on the Domain, and some of these have revived as the soil dried and the root systems were able to re-establish themselves. Most of the trees have two growth periods. The first in spring is marked by light green growth pretty much all over the tree and the second in late summer is seen in the late burst of leaders in preparation for the next spring.

A number of trees lagged in spring but had healthy leaders by autumn. Examples of these include 295 (Allan Marsh), 467 (Hector Long) and 509 (Bernard Seidel) – they all suffered from planting shock but have recovered.



A number of trees will be replaced in winter as they showed few signs of revival and have less than 5% foliage. Andrew Robert-Tissot, the Council arborist, has reported that a number of trees will be replaced this winter -321 (William Thollar), 329 (Percival Fowler), 337 (Alexander Reading see picture to left), 407 (William Pegler), 427 (Ernest Drake), H11 (John Quamby see below) and 496 (William Wrathall).

All the 2008 trees received extra fertiliser and mulch over the summer.

One great benefit throughout the Avenue of the extra water last winter is the impressive seeding – many trees that have not developed cones or seed heads in the last decade have now a lush display and strong late season growth. Trees that benefited in the last few seasons from the removal of competing wattles and blue gums have consolidated nicely over the last season from a bountiful

water supply. There are signs of minor dieback of foliage on a half dozen of the older and smaller trees but this seems part of a natural cycle within many of the cedars as the water and nutrients are re-directed from marginal foliage (sometimes closer in and subject to shade, sometimes on more exposed margins) to new growth on healthier limbs.

New Map and Brochure underway

Our designer Mik O’Leary has been working on a new map and brochure for the Avenue, reflecting the changes on the ground and plans for the redevelopment of the Oval. We hope that can be completed in the next few months for release in either August or November. The new map will colour code tree positions by the year of death of the soldier, and include backgrounds that show year of planting of the tree. This will simply and visually give many a better sense of the layout of the Avenue and also place context around the experience of the 1st AIF and that of families in Hobart. Between April 1915 and May 1919 the bad news was constant – at least 2 ‘Hobart’ soldiers died each month except for January, February and March 1916. The lowest monthly total is 2, the highest 53. The greatest number of deaths occurred in France and Belgium.

1915 70 Most of these men died during or as a result of the Gallipoli campaign. The worst months were April (12), May (18) and August (21).

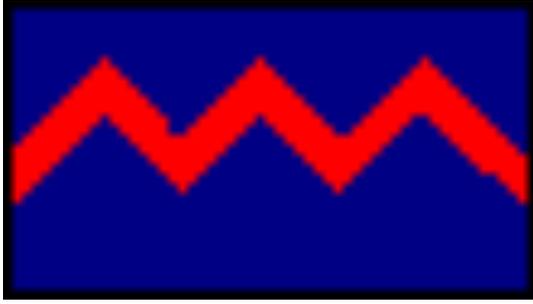
1916 134 These deaths include some Light horsemen who died during or immediately after the Battle of Romani in August 1916. In all 36 died in July and 39 in August in battles for and around Pozieres. 25 died during September during or as a result of attacks on Mouquet Farm. 23 died during November and December in attacks around Guedecourt and ‘The Maze’, Flers.

1917 187 11 died in January 1917 on the Somme beyond Flers. The next major group is 40 who died in March 1917 in the advance to the Hindenburg line, particularly in actions around Boursies and Lagnicourt. 20 were to die in September around Polygon Wood. The worst month was October 1917 with 53 deaths mainly on or near Broodseinde Ridge near Passchendaele.

1918 134 27 died during April largely on the Somme holding the German offensives but also in Flanders near Meteren. 33 died in the attacks from 4 August onwards at the beginning of the ‘100 days of victories’.

1919 6 These men largely died of sickness due to the effects of the influenza pandemic.

36th Heavy Artillery Group



Among the 50 or so gunners on the Avenue are 4 who served in a very different unit – the 36th Heavy Artillery Group. Most gunners served in the Australian Field Artillery, attached and working with Australian infantry units. They also often supported units of the British army. For most of their wartime experience though they were close to or part of the AIF. For the men of the 36th HAG, there was little contact with other Australians – the heavy artillery was under the command of an Army (made of Corps comprised of Divisions) and its placement and use was decided at the highest level.

There were some other significant differences. These heavy gunners were, according to their attestation papers, permanent soldiers. Around Australia, important ports had their fixed defences manned by men of the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery. These had a core permanent group with volunteers from the militia making up the full establishment. At the outbreak of war, all of these men became full time soldiers. The Defence Act allowed their call-up to permanent duty.* After the initial threats of German raiders had subsided, most transferred to the AIF, the new unit was assembled in Melbourne and embarked in 17 July 1915

The unit embarked as the Siege Artillery Brigade and consisted of 2 batteries (the 54th and 55th). On arrival in Britain, it underwent training and equipping and was transferred to France in late February-early March 1916. It became the 36th Heavy Artillery Group. Late in the war it also became referred to as the 36th Heavy Artillery

Brigade. It was the first Australian unit in France arriving in March 1916 and was committed to operations in support of British units near Arras.

Right: 4 gunners loading a 9.2 inch howitzer, July 1916 (AWM EZ0147)

The unit was moved back and forth along the front supporting units from the British and Commonwealth as well as Belgian and French troops. There were few casualties compared with the infantry but when the guns were well forward, they were



for all intents and purposes immovable and highly vulnerable to counter-battery fire from the Germans. On 4 October 1917, the unit came under heavy fire and lost nearly a quarter of its men dead or wounded. As you can see the photograph, this was hot work in summer and diabolical in the run and mud of Flanders – at one stage, the guns were left in place for Canadian gunners as it was simply impossible to move them through the shell-pocked muddy landscape.

In December 1917, 2 more batteries were added and the unit became the 36th Heavy Artillery Brigade. Most of 1918 was spent in Flanders with some guns lost in the German offensive of April 1918. 14 men from Anglesea barracks embarked with the original Siege Brigade and another 27 Tasmanians went as reinforcements specifically for the Group during 1916 and 1917.

Gunner Richard Henry Drake (Tree#310) Died of wounds 4/10/1917 Enlisted Hobart 7/6/1915 Son of Mary Eveine Drake of Riverton (Derwent Valley). Based at Anglesea Barracks. Formerly a clerk.

soldier was placed at each tree. Today only about 200 survive.¹ Those outside the main town area were planted a mile apart – where possible trees were planted near the family home.² The Avenue radiated in a star from the Junction, through Oamaru, to Katiki, Livingstone, Kurow and Waitaki Bridge. The Memorials Oaks Committee was formed in 1991 and has worked to restore the Avenue. In 2008, students from Otago Polytechnic worked on many of the trees removing dead and damaged timber and trimming and shaping trees. The original wooden crosses are now long gone with new white concrete crosses marking surviving trees. Many of the trees now have crosses – some, as originally, commemorating brothers.

Another significant planting was at Pukekohe School 26 trees planted in 1924 to commemorate old boys of the school who had fallen during the First World War. Memorial stones were later placed at the base of each tree and these were restored and rededicated on 24 April 2006. It seems however that the trees have gone with the memorial stones now placed in front of rose bushes.



Many of New Zealand's other avenues were planted to commemorate the dead of the Second World War. Gladstone, in Wairarapa, commemorates soldiers from the district who lost their lives in the Second World War. Thirty-six scarlet oaks were planted along this road (see left). Similar plantings of memorial avenues – most often using oaks – are also prominent in North Otago and South Canterbury.³ Another survivor is the Southburn Memorial Avenue with a boulder with bronze tablet marking this avenue.⁴

The largest of the Second World War avenues is the Memorial Avenue through Burnside in Christchurch. The Avenue was created as part of a major road development to connect the city with the airport. It is 4.3 km long and was opened by the Governor General Viscount Cobham on 26 November 1926. The late dedication was the result of long planning not afterthought – the original discussion about an avenue began in 1945. It was soon realised the project was too big for one local council and soon a number of county councils joined in the enterprise. The Burnside Memorial Road Committee was formed in October 1952 and the task of raising the funds and buying or compulsorily acquiring the necessary land. It took until 1956 to finalise the route and until 1959 to complete. The proposal for a 120ft high monument was rejected as too costly and too distracting for motorists – the committee opted for two lesser memorials, one at each end.⁵ This while large and impressive is quite different from the other memorial avenues in New Zealand – there is no indication of a planting and dedication of individual trees, it is a general memorial only and for many people just a street name.

Book Reviews – John Wadsley

Gallipoli Sniper by John Hamilton

When one thinks of Gallipoli, it is often the images of the struggle for survival during the Landing, the tragic and futile charge at the Nek, or the August campaign and opportunities lost. While John Hamilton provides the broader context of the Gallipoli campaign, he primarily focuses on the experiences of Billy Sing, sniper and the 5th Light Horse.

The life of Billy Sing, as described by Hamilton, could in many ways be the life of many of those who served at Gallipoli. The hardened bushman, born to a life in outback Queensland as a stockman and

¹ Otago Daily Times Online News 11 Jun 2008 www.odt.co.nz/regions/north-otago/.../polytech-students-trim-oak-trees

² New Zealand History On-line www.nzhistory.net.nz/

³ 'Trees in the rural landscape' The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand TeAra.govt.nz

⁴ New Zealand History On-line www.nzhistory.net.nz

⁵ <http://christchurchcitylibraries.com/heritage/localhistory/fendalton/memorial.asp>

miner. Sing became a crack shot, a trait that would set him apart at Gallipoli, and a skill that would give him a notoriety among his fellow soldiers, including the generals. However, as with so many brave men, in the end he would die, alone and poor back in Australia, forgotten by the country he had fought for.

Hamilton weaves an interesting story, albeit without a lot of primary material relating to Sing. He describes the enlistment and training of the 5th Light Horse Regiment in Queensland, the experience that some of them had from the Boer War and the enthusiasm they all had to fight for the Mother Country. He is able to bring together a range of sources to create the story, and while at times, you get the feeling he is padding it out to make up for the lack of direct material about Billy Sing, the book works.

On the Gallipoli Peninsula Hamilton provides very detailed accounts of how the sniper worked, the attention to detail in selecting a position to view the enemy, the patience required, and the dedication to their craft that set them apart. Once these skills were recognised, snipers were often excused the fatigue duties required of other soldiers, although this 'benefit' was replaced by the fact that as they became more successful the Turks became more interested in neutralising this deadly threat to their own troops. The 5th Light Horse eventually came to hold the far right of the Anzac position at Chatham's Post and Ryrrie's Post, and Sing was an instrumental part of containing the enemy. The discussion of how critical this position was to the Anzacs provides an insight into an aspect of the campaign not often discussed.

Overall, this is a well-written book that is worth reading, as much as Hamilton's first book Goodbye Cobber, God Bless You.

The Derwent Regiment 1903-1965 by Doug Wyatt

Doug Wyatt is a well-known local author and curator of the 12/40th Bn RTR Museum at Derwent Barracks. His other books have focussed on Tasmanian volunteer units and this is no exception. This latest book provides a chronological account of the Derwent Regiment from its beginnings as a volunteer militia unit through its connections with other units raised in the Great War and Second World War to its links with the current Royal Tasmanian Regiment.

There are many interesting and unusual illustrations, which complement the text. Wyatt has also produced a companion CD which holds over 300 images, many not in the book, and these alone are worth viewing particularly the images of military camps and exercises held in many locations across Tasmania.

For those interested in soldiers who fought in the Great War, this book on the Derwent Regiment helps to show how many men gained their initial military training through these local units and how this experience was invaluable, especially to those who became officers in the AIF after 1914.

The many changes in unit names and incarnations are well documented by Wyatt and this is useful to understand the lineage of modern Tasmanian units today. This is well presented book that provides much information to those interested in Tasmanian military history.

Many thanks to Duncan Kerr MP SC, Federal Member for Denison and his staff for photocopying this newsletter. We would also like to acknowledge the support of the Globe Group.

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