

Friends of Soldiers Memorial Avenue Inc. Newsletter Issue 31: March 2007



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Dates to remember

April 15th, 22nd and 25th - Displays at the Victoria Magazine

President's Report

Well, we asked for some rain and we received some very good falls during January, which have helped the Avenue trees to cope with the summer heat. In fact the grass along the Avenue is quite lush for the time of year. Some good follow-up rains in autumn would be very nice, thank you!

Our February dedications were very successful and thanks to all those sponsors, guests, families and friends who attended, particularly our Patron, Governor of Tasmania William Cox AC RFD ED, who performed the Dedication Ceremony. The assistance of the Tassal Group in funding these plaques is much appreciated. With the pending construction of the extension to the Avenue around the lower Crossroads Oval, the committee has endorsed a new strategy for plaque dedications over the next two years. This will ensure we can apply our resources to researching and producing the large number of plaques required. However, the most important matter is to find descendants of the soldiers, so please spread the word and look out for media articles and notices over the coming months.

I look forward to seeing lots of members at the displays and tours to be held at the Victoria Magazine and on the Avenue during April.

John Wadsley

February 15th Dedications



Our last dedication ceremony, held on Thursday 15th February, was blessed with fine weather and an excellent attendance by invited guests, descendant families and friends. Tassal, our major corporate sponsor, contributed the funds for 14 of the plaques, with two plaques funded by private family donations.

The Governor of Tasmania delivered the main address stressing the importance of the occasion and reminding families and organisations to take advantage of the newly received DGR status for donations towards plaques and restoration of the Avenue. There were also speeches from Peg Putt MHA, Michael Hodgman MHA, Graeme Sturges MHA and Deputy Lord Mayor, Ald Eva Ruzicka.

The Self family's dedication for Pte Frederick Self (#487) was very moving and those who attended the dedications for Pte Albert Pearce (#503) and Bmdr Albert Scurrah (#365) on the following Saturday expressed the same sentiment. Some interesting biographies on Self and Pearce are found later in this newsletter.

The plaques dedicated are located in the southern section of the Avenue just north of the Davies Avenue underpass. Virtually the entire southern section from Aberdeen Street to tree #106 has now been completed. This brings the total number of new plaques dedicated along the Avenue to approximately 275, a fantastic achievement which could only be possible through the support of so many families, organisations, businesses and friends.

Morning tea was held after the event and was well attended. Thanks to all committee members and friends for their efforts in making the day work so well.



Above: Invited dignitaries, guests and friends listen as the Governor William Cox (right) makes his address.

Heritage Festival Tours and Displays

In April FOSMA is participating in Heritage Month, which is organised by the National Trust and Heritage Tasmania, with support from the RSL. This year the theme is Military Heritage, specifically mateship and the Australian Spirit in wartime. The Military Museum at Anglesea Barracks will also be involved, with the launch of Heritage Month at the Museum on 3rd April.

A display will be held at the State Library for the whole month, which will include material provided by the Military Museum and FOSMA. FOSMA's contribution will include the following activities:

- Sunday April 15th - Display at the Victoria Magazine, 10 am – 3 pm
- Sunday April 15th - Tour of the Avenue by Adrian Howard, 10.30 am – 12 noon (please note, you will need to book for this tour through the National Trust on 6228 7616)
- Sunday April 22nd – Display at the Victoria Magazine, 10 am – 3 pm
- Wednesday April 25th – Tours of the Avenue and Display at the Victoria Magazine, 12 noon – 4 pm

We encourage all members to participate in Heritage Month, not only the FOSMA activities, but also the many other events held throughout the State, at National Trust properties and other sites. There will also be a series of speakers on the theme of mateship in wartime at the State Library, Murray Street on April 5th, 17th, 19th, 23rd and 24th from 12.30 pm to 1.30 pm.

Dedication Strategy for 2007-2008

As some of you will know, the FOSMA committee has decided to adopt a new dedication strategy to support the reinstatement of the Avenue around the Crossroads Oval in 2008. We will focus our efforts on researching and producing the plaques for the following events:

- Remembrance Day, November 2007 – approximately 20 plaques in the centre section of the Avenue;
- Anzac Day 2008 – approximately 25 plaques at the far northern end of the Avenue at the Crossroads, as the precursor to the construction of the new path around the oval;
- 3rd August 2008 – the major dedication ceremony planned for the 90th Anniversary of the Avenue's creation in which there will be at least 50 plaques dedicated around half the Oval.
- Family Dedications – we will still provide assistance to families who wish to have private dedications over the next two years
- Other events – we will continue to have a number of working bees during the year and are examining opportunities to hold some social events (more details later!!!)

Soldier's Stories: Pte Albert Herculean Augustus Pearce (compiled by Adrian Howard)

At the age of 28, Albert Herculean Augustus Pearce, father of two young children, enlisted on 20 March 1916 with the 40th Bn as part of the original C Company. After training at Claremont, he embarked with the battalion on 1 July 1916 aboard HMAT Berrima from Hobart. The battalion sailed to England and trained with the rest of the Australia-raised 3rd Division on Salisbury Plain. A move to the frontlines in Belgium came in November first disembarking at Le Havre on 24 November 1917. From there they went by train to Bailleul, a town that hosts the graves of many Tasmanians, and then bus (a great novelty) to Merris. On 2 December, they marched 14 miles to the nursery sector of Armentieres. For them the war had begun.

Albert's experience at the front was short: 34 days in fact, as he was killed in action on 7 January 1917 during a routine rotation through the line. He was buried in Cite Bonjean Military Cemetery, Armentieres.

The son of George and Annie of 160 Bathurst St, he had grown up as part of large family with siblings Polly, Ann, Georgina, George, Alice, Ruby, Lydia and William (who enlisted as #2373, a sapper in 3rd Field Co, Australian Engineers). He had married Ivy Lydia and had two children, Albert Edward and Ivy Annie. He supported his family working as a labourer and they had made the family home in Charles St, Moonah. On his death, support came from the Ancient Order of Druids, one of the many benevolent societies formed to provide funeral and death benefits for members. It is not known exactly when or which tree was dedicated to his memory and #503 has been allocated to him.

Among the family mementoes are 2 short poems sent back to Ivy on a postcard.

*Though you are there and I am here
And we are far apart
Affection reaches everywhere
the fond and faithful heart
And so I send this card to you,
across the sundering sea,
that you may know that I am true
As you are true to me*

*we are sailing in the morning,
E'er the sun up we shall start,
While the girl ashore is weeping,
For the hand that brushed her heart,
But t'aint no good of crying,
Calling God to make me stay,
There's bound to come the morning
When a man must sail away.*



Above: Albert with Ivy Louisa, Albert stands with his father, Ivy Annie is on her mother's knee (courtesy of Elaine Gowling)



Left: Descendants of Albert after the dedication. This ceremony took place on 17 February to coincide with a gathering of the family for a wedding. The plaque will be installed in April 2008 within the 1st stage of the restoration of the Crossroads.

Soldiers Stories: The Four Self Brothers (compiled by Andrea Gerrard)

As World War 1 dragged on, more recruits were needed daily to man the trenches and to fire the guns in France. There was an expectation that Australia would supply fresh recruits on a regular basis. And while conscription was not a publicly palatable answer to the problem of finding more recruits, men willing to fight had to come from somewhere. The relaxation of the earlier rules regarding age, height, chest measurement etc meant men who had previously been rejected were now passed as fit to join the AIF. The names of older, married men also start appearing on embarkation rolls.

Over the course of the war four of Frederick and Jane Self's six sons went away to the fight at the front. The name of Self has two lasting Hobart associations – through local cycling businesses and through the name of Self's Point at New Town. Frederick Snr was at one time the water bailiff for Hobart and lived on what was then Cemetery Point from about the late 1880's. Jack, Bob and Fred were all known to be keen cyclists. Frederick was also a good rower and member of the Buckingham Rowing Club.



Frederick (pictured at left with his wife Emily and children Thelma, Reg, Madge and Merle), the eldest son was the last to go. He was in his late 30's, a married man with four children to support. His occupation was given as that of a labourer, but he also worked for the Hobart Fire Brigade as a fireman.

He enlisted on 15th January 1918 and arrived in England in April. After training he joined his battalion in August, but after just a few days at the front was killed in action on 11 August 1918 with the 12th Battalion which was involved in the great battle for Amiens.

While many saw enlistment as the beginning of a great adventure, Frederick saw it as his duty to enlist and had some regrets about this as facing the enemy and having to fire a gun loomed closer. Fred may have had a premonition that he wouldn't survive to come home to his family and in his letters to his daughter Thelma, he is keen to not only to be remembered as a good and loving father to his children, but also to their friends.

One of his letters written on board HMAT Nestor just before they docked clearly shows his mixed feelings.

18 April 1918

Dear Old Thelma,

I now write a few lines to let you know that I will soon be on shore. I will be sorry for it. It won't be long until I am in the firing line now, but I will be glad to be ashore to get a letter from home. Thel, I am sorry that I ever left you and if ever it comes my way again I will never leave you again.

Now I want you to be kind to Mum and little Madge and do all you can to help Mum, and if you have luck to see me again I will be a better father to you, but I was never bad to you children. I never treated your mother as I ought to have done. Now Thelma I suppose your garden is looking alright, look after it. I suppose mum's fowls are laying now or have you lost some of them. Thel, all day today we have been packing up so we are sure to go ashore some time through the night, they say that they won't land us in daylight, but it is dusk now and we can't see land around us anymore. We all have on our shore dress and our Kits packed so it won't be long now. Thelma you won't know me now for I have gone quite white. If I get one of our photos where I was taken on our crafts I will send you one. Our officers took a photo of us and if I can get one off them I will send it to you, but look after it, for it might be the last you get of me. I look very funny with my life belt on.

Do you have any trouble with Reg and Madge? I suppose old Reggie still wants his flowers now and he don't have his old Dad to growl at him. I suppose Mum could not make head nor tail of my letters for they all seemed as one with no date on them, but from now I can put a date on them, we were not allowed to do so before.

Now Thel, I will be able to look around and buy you a present as I promised. I will not get any leave in England like I got in Tassy for they give you 4 days embarkment leave and 10 days before I go into the firing line so it will be a fortnight.

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I will have to see a little of Poor old Blighty so I will have something to see and tell you about and it won't be all water to look at. You will be able to see all about my trip from my diary I am sending to mother,

"Now Thelma, remember me to all kind friends. I am sending you a ship paper so you can see all the news that we get. I have had a very bad cold but am a lot better. Be a good girl to Mum. Give my love to all, give little Reg and Madge a kiss for me, not forgetting old snowy."

"So good night, God bless, I remain your loving father."

Fred Self

He may have forgotten the family photo that was taken in Hobart with his wife. Whether the photos from on board HMAAT Nestor were ever sent is not known.

Bob (Robert James Fuller), pictured at right, enlisted in August 1915. He, like Jack (Herbert John) Self, had been working as a cycle mechanic in Hobart before joining the AIF. Bob was the only one of the four boys to have served at Gallipoli, joining the 26th Battalion and serving just under three months on the Peninsula before being transferred out of there with rheumatism at the beginning of December 1915.

After a period of convalescing Bob rejoined the 26th Battalion, disembarking at Marseilles in late March, 1916 as part of the 2nd Division. By June he had seen his first action in the trenches and shortly would be involved in the battalion's first major battle around Pozieres in July and August. After recovering from an accident in December 1916 in which he sustained a knee injury, Bob remained in England for around 9 months transferring to another Battalion. But by September Bob was back with his old unit in France.

This lasted only a short time and by November he was again transferred, this time to his brother's battalion – the 52nd Battalion, where the men served with distinction at Dernancourt in April 1918 and again at Villers-Bretonneux on Anzac Day 1918. In early May 1918, Bob was transferred to the 51st Battalion and saw action once more in the Allies offensive of early August 1918. He may or may not have returned from leave in time to be involved in the battalion's last major operation – being part of the 4th Division's reserve for the attack on the Hindenburg 'outpost line'. Bob returned to Australia in early 1919. After the war Bob married Winnifred Jean Townsend, raised a family in Hobart. He later moved to Montrose and lived there until his death in 1968.



Like Frederick, Jack (pictured at left) joined the 12th Battalion, which was among the first infantry units raised for the AIF. Half of the men came from Tasmania with the remainder from South Australia and Western Australia. Jack joined up in August 1915 and embarked in November 1915. In March 1916 the 52nd Battalion was formed taking approximately half of its recruits from the veterans of the 12th Battalion and half from fresh reinforcements, Jack included. The new battalion arrived in France in June 1916 with the 4th Division. The men of the 52nd are justly famous for their first major battle at Mouquet Farm on 3rd September 1916 where they suffered heavy losses.

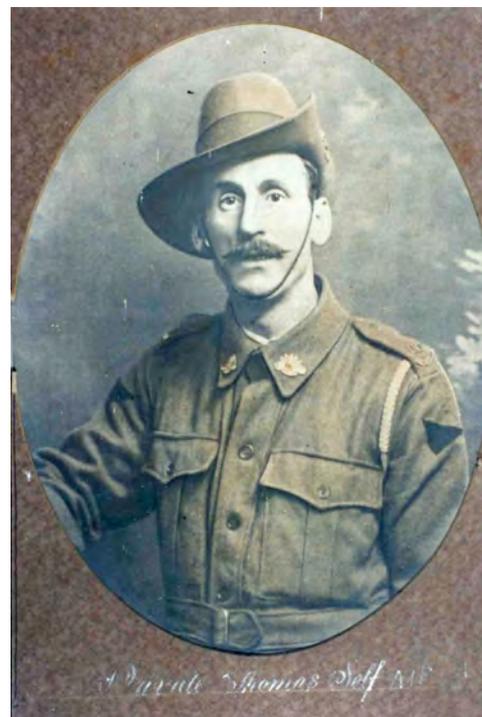
In December Jack was attached to the 1st ANZAC Workshops and remained there until May when once again he rejoined his old unit. Shortly afterwards he was promoted to Lance Corporal and later Corporal. While he missed the action at Noreuil in April he was back with his unit in time for the battle of Messines between 7th and 12th June and the battle of Polygon Wood on 26th September.

Jack may have been considered one of the lucky ones to have had only one period of illness and not been injured in any way. But at

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Dernancourt his luck ran out when he sustained shrapnel wound to his left leg resulting in a compound fracture of his femur. Jack's war service was now over and after a period in England was repatriated to Australia in January 1919. His war injury left him with a permanent limp. Jack died in 1937 aged 43.

Thomas, the second son (shown at right), was living in Melbourne when war broke out. Like his brother Frederick, he too was married and with a family and was now in his mid 30's. Thomas married Elsie Olive Effie Hodges in 1904 and by the outbreak of war they too had four children. In March, 1916 he joined the 22nd Battalion in the 2nd Division. While Thomas was away fighting, Olive, his wife and their children returned to Moonah and lived with Frederick Snr.



During his period of enlistment Thomas had several periods in hospital suffering from influenza and pneumonia and trench fever as well as being wounded in action twice. His battalion took part in the action at Pozieres and later moved to the Ypres sector then back to the Somme. He sustained minor facial injuries in October 1917 and was treated at one of the field hospitals in France.

Thomas returned to his battalion and was then gassed in July, 1918 during one of the many penetrations of the enemy's lines by the 6th Brigade. During his recuperation in England he again became ill with pneumonia and was returned to Australia in March 1919. Thomas and Olive lived in Hobart for a while but eventually returned to the mainland. By 1935 Thomas was living in New South Wales. His youngest son Alwyn or Cobber as he was known served during World War 2 with the 12th Field Engineers.

Andrea would like to thank Mrs. Barbara Lovell for the use of her photos and to Bryan Needham for Frederick's letter to his daughter Thelma.

Send us your stories and photographs!!

If you have any letters, diaries, photographs or images from a soldier commemorated on the Avenue that you would like to share with our membership, please get in contact with the committee and we would be happy to include your story in a future edition.

Many thanks to Duncan Kerr MHR for photocopying.

<p>Friends of Soldiers Memorial Avenue Inc., PO Box 162, Lindisfarne TAS 7015 Phone : 6248 7294 / 0417 487 289 E-mail: info@soldierswalk.org.au</p> <p>Patron: His Excellency William Cox AC RFD ED Governor of Tasmania President: J Wadsley Secretary: B Halliwell</p>
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