

Friends of Soldiers Memorial Avenue Inc. Newsletter Issue 32: June 2007



Highlights

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Dates to remember

Quiz Night Friday 17 August Lindisfarne RSL

MEMBERSHIPS FOR 2007/08 ARE DUE NOW



President's Report

In recent months FOSMA has been involved in a number of activities and events, notably the Tasmanian Heritage Festival and Anzac Day commemorations, as well as Avenues Kit launch (more details in this newsletter). To all those who contributed time and effort to arrange and participate in these events, thank you.

Since Anzac Day we have noticed a significant increase in the number of people seeking information about possible ancestors on the SMA, as well as many families taking up the advantages of tax deductibility status for donations. This is most pleasing because it proves that public awareness of the Avenue is growing.

The committee has now begun planning for the opening of the Crossroads redevelopment on Sunday 3rd August next year, which will involve a significant number of plaque dedications. We hope to make this a major event that involves hundreds of guests, families and participants. We will need to have many volunteers helping on the day with car parking, crowd control, catering, general organisation and dedications. So if you are able to help, please let Adrian Howard or myself know by the end of July.

We have recently audited our membership/newsletter lists and noted many people have not renewed their subscriptions. A new membership form is attached to the postal cover sheet for you to complete and return post haste! If you do not renew we will stop sending this wonderful newsletter to you! We also need your continuing support.

Finally I have to advise that Bill Halliwell was forced to resign as Secretary owing to work commitments. Even though he had only a short time on the committee, Bill's good humour and timely advice was much appreciated. We wish Bill all the best. At this stage, Andrea Gerrard has stepped into the breach as Acting Secretary.

John Wadsley

Avenues Kit Launch

On Tuesday 26th June, FOSMA's Patron the Governor of Tasmania, William Cox AC RFD ED, officially launched the "Avenues Kit", prepared by Adrian Howard. This project was funded through the Tasmanian Community Fund.

The publication of this community self-help kit will help many local groups wishing to restore memorial avenues around the State. The Kit includes a CD with historical descriptions of plantings, links to websites, documents for applications and submissions, and a template for an action plan. The RTBG has played a large role and provided botanical information for the Kit. This kit uses case studies from FOSMA's experience on the SMA as well as from other groups working to restore avenues around the State. Drysdale Institute has helped with the final physical production of the Kit.

The launch was attended by Duncan Kerr MHR, Doug Parkinson MLC, Gerald Loughran Chairman of the TCF, Deputy Lord Mayor Eva Ruzicka, Tony Scott RSL State President and representatives of many of the groups involved in the project. The Kit is a credit to Adrian's hard work and commitment on the project.

State Government Grant

As some of you may be aware, we have been in discussions with the State Government over the last three years regarding securing further support for the SMA. Thanks to the support of Tony Scott RSL President and the RSL State Branch, we recently received a cheque for \$40,000 from the Premier, Hon Paul Lennon MHA. This will be directed towards the research, production and installation of a large number of plaques on the Avenue.

This is a much needed financial boost and, along with the continuing corporate sponsorship provided by the Tassal Group Ltd and family donations, will enable us to proceed with confidence towards the re-establishment of the Avenue around the Crossroads Oval. We are very grateful for the support of the State Government and RSL towards the final restoration of the State's largest war memorial.

Membership Paid for Life

The committee has recently discussed the creation of a "Membership Paid for Life" member category, which will be put up for ratification at the AGM. This would be for those members who wish to make a financial contribution now to avoid having to pay yearly subscriptions. The committee considers that \$200 (equivalent to twenty years membership at current rates) is an appropriate sum. If any member is interested, please contact John Wadsley.

Remembrance Days Dedications List

The tree numbers and soldiers proposed for the dedications ceremony to be held on Saturday 11th November are shown below. If you are a descendant or have any information on these men, please contact the committee.

138 Pte Benjamin Anderson, 52 nd Bn, KIA 3/9/1916	162 Cpl Phillip Turner, 6 th Bde AFA, DOW 3/11/1916
141 Cpl Stanley Burge, 52 nd Bn, KIA 3/9/1916	163 Cpl William McAllister, 5 th Bde AFA, KIA 29/9/1918
143 Pte Alan Combes, 12 th Bn, KIA 18/9/1918	164 Pte Walter Langdon, 19 th Bn KIA 5/10/1916
146 Pte Olaf Johanson, 52 nd Bn, KIA 4/9/1916	165 Pte Charles Henley, 12 th Bn, KIA 19/8/1916
148 Pte Robert Anderson, 52 nd Bn KIA 4/9/1916	166 Pte Lambert Gadd, 26 th Bn, KIA 5/11/1916
150 Pte James Shea, 52 nd Bn, KIA 4/9/1916	168 Cpl Percy Harrison, 26 th Bn, KIA 5/11/1916
152 L/Cpl John Benson, 12 th Bn, KIA 3/9/1915	169 Pte Thomas/Tasman Clark, 26 th Bn, DOW 20/4/1916
153 Pte Roy Butler, 4 th Coy AASC, DOW 8/9/1916	170 Pte Leonard Smart, 26 th Bn, KIA 14/11/1916
154 Cpl Frederick Banes, 26 th Bn, DOW 13/6/1916	171 Dvr Benjamin Hewett, 103 rd Heavy Bty, KIA 9/11/1916
156 Gnr Allan Cato, 10 th Bde AFA, KIA 20/9/1917	172 CSM Charles Wilkie DCM, 26 th Bn, KIA 14/11/1916
157 Pte Herbert Edwards, 26 th Bn, KIA 25/8/1916	173 Cpl Henry Pearce, 26 th Bn, DOW 26/11/1916
158 Pte Horace Whitmore, 52 nd Bn, DOW 3/10/1916	175 Cpl Cyril Luttrell, 26 th Bn, DOW 21/11/1916
159 Pte Thomas Fox, 12 th Bn, DOW 20/9/1918	339 Pte Arthur Albury, 12 th Bn, KIA 19/8/1916
161 Pte Charles Woodleigh, 52 nd Bn, KIA 3/9/1916	

Adrian Howard gets a Gong!!



Rather belatedly we can report that FOSMA's founder, Adrian Howard, was awarded an Australia Day Achievement Medallion by the RSL State Branch. Many of you would be aware of this, but we should have announced this in the last newsletter. Suffice to say, well done Adrian, a thoroughly deserved honour to recognise your tireless work for the SMA and other avenues around the State.

Left; RSL State Vice President Chris Oakes presents Adrian with the Achievement Medallion

Heritage Festival Displays and Tours

As part of the Tasmanian Heritage Festival organised by the National Trust and the Tasmanian Heritage Council, FOSMA held three public displays at the Victoria Gunpowder Magazine on the Domain during April.

As well, Adrian Howard and tourism students from the Drysdale Institute conducted tours along the Avenue, and John Wadsley presented a talk at the State Library.

The FOSMA displays were organised by John Trethewey and Andrea Gerrard; however this year we were delighted to have the support of Peter Pickering who organised a display of his 3rd Light Horse Regiment memorabilia, which was very well received (see picture at right).

We were extremely grateful to receive support from Heritage Tasmania, for the printing and laminating of posters describing various aspects of the Avenue and some of the soldiers stories, focussing on the theme of mateship. These posters were researched and prepared by Adrian Howard and Andrea Gerrard with graphic design by Mik O'Leary, and they look fantastic.

The displays were a great success with nearly 500 people attending over the three days. Good media coverage was received early on, which made a great impact and brought more people in on subsequent days. Many positive comments were received about the display with many people wanting to know more about the history of the Magazine itself.



Over 150 membership applications were given out along with the brochures. 13 new memberships have been received and a number of people asked about donating plaques for family members including the relatives of Edward Sweeney, Ernest and Vernon Drake, William Cragg, Fred Nicholson and Henry McAllister.

The powerpoint display, Tasmanian War Record on CD, and documentary videos provided extra interest for people and we will try to have more information provided by these formats in the future.

Thanks goes to all those who helped in different ways, and to the various organisations who supplied food, drink etc.

The Quiz Night is on again!!!

Yes, it is happening, on **Friday, 17th August 2007, 7.15 pm for 7.30 pm** start at the Lindisfarne RSL Clubrooms, Lincoln Street Lindisfarne. The last quiz night was very successful and raised over \$1,000 towards FOSMA restoration and dedication activities, with over 60 people attending.

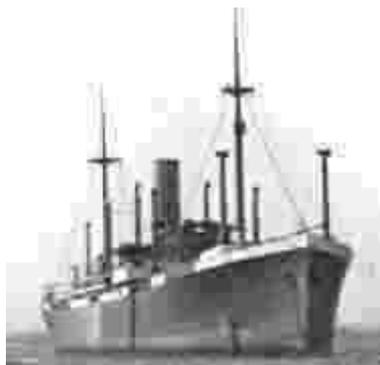
We hope this next event will be just as successful, so put a team together (4-6 people is best) or just come along. The cost will be \$10 per head, which includes supper. A bar will be operational on the night.

So, start brushing up on your current affairs, sporting, entertainment, history and science knowledge. Come along for a great night's entertainment. There will be a door prize, raffles and many other prizes for the brainy ones!!!! (and maybe some for the rest of us too.) Don't be late, heads down at 7.30 pm sharp

The Boorara (ex Pflaz) and the Drake family (prepared by Andrea Gerrard)

The first shots to be fired by Australian gunners during World War 1 were on the 5th August, 1914 and on home territory. The shots were fired by Fort Nepean and aimed at the German steamer 'Pflaz' as it tried to slip through Port Philip Heads.

The Pflaz of Bremen was docked in Melbourne when hostilities were declared. Aware of the situation the captain and crew had made ready to leave, ostensibly bound for Sydney, but in reality the intention was to make for a South American port. To achieve this an additional 200 tons of coal had to be loaded. This meant that the vessel was later leaving the wharf. Added to this was the congestion being experienced in the Yarra.



The S.S. Pflaz (nd)
Ref: PRO Victoria VA 2799

The Pflaz steamed slowly towards the Heads under tow. At the Heads she was met by the crew of the Examination Service who were checking all vessels on behalf of the Naval Board. When the crew examined the Pflaz the officer in charge was unaware that war had been declared, and with no reason to delay the vessel, gave permission for it to proceed on her voyage.

Just as Captain Robinson of the Port Philip Pilot Service was turning the Pflaz around, several German consular officials appeared on deck, where scenes of jubilation were displayed. Captain Robinson continued to be unaware of the declaration of war until those at Fort Nepean fired a shot across the bow of the Pflaz in order to make her stop. The young captain of the steamer who was on his first voyage was prepared to make a run for it, but with the threat of a direct hit from the battery, changed his mind and surrendered. The Pflaz was then brought back to Portsea where the crew were put under arrest.¹

Months later after a refit, the former Pflaz was renamed the Boorara and began her fairly chequered career for the Imperial authorities. In July 1915 the Boorara was transporting Turkish prisoners from Gallipoli when she was rammed by the Kléber, a French armoured-cruiser. One steward was missing as a result of the collision. The vessel didn't sink as was expected and was able to make her own way to Mudros Harbour. Less than a year later while carrying a load of sulphur, a fire broke out in her holds, but was extinguished without incident.

The next two years passed without incident while the Boorara carried troops and general cargo to various ports around the world. In mid 1917 she sustained minor damage from two collisions, one with the Abbassieh in June and 6 weeks later with the S.S. Adria. On the 20th March, 1918 while making a zigzag course down the English Channel to Plymouth, she was torpedoed off Beachy Head lighthouse by a submarine. A large hole was blown into her port side abreast of the funnel. The engine room was flooded and five men lost their lives. Trawlers quickly came to her aid and the steamer was towed to Southampton.



HMT Boorara - showing torpedo damage sustained on 20/3/1918. Ref: AWM H02290

After being made seaworthy again, the Boorara was towed to Newcastle for a refit, but before she could make port was torpedoed with the engine room again sustaining the most damage. The vessel finished her voyage to Newcastle and twelve months later was again in active service carrying troops back home.

Five men lost their lives when the first torpedo hit the Boorara in the English Channel.² Among these men was Ernest Alan Drake of New Town. Ernest Drake was a fireman on board the Boorara³ and was down in the engine room when it was struck by the torpedo. He was no stranger to being on vessels that were being fired upon. He had previously been on board another vessel that had been struck by a torpedo and on

¹ Bean, C.E.W., Volume ix, Page 547

² Ibid, Pages 421-22, 503, 510-512

³ Australian War Memorial Commemorative Roll

another that had been burnt at sea.⁴ Ernest Drake was a merchant mariner and had been at sea for some time including several years working for the Union Company out of Hobart. His name appears on the Mercantile Marine Memorial on Tower Hill, London. Tree No 427 on the Soldiers Memorial Avenue was planted by his family in his memory. He is the only naval person represented on the Avenue.



Ernest Alan Drake was the eldest son of Samuel Drake, carpenter and his wife Annie Irwin Page. The couple lived at 18 Pirie Street where they raised a family of six children. The youngest children – Vernon and Joyce are known to have attended New Town State School⁵, but it is quite likely that all the children attended, it being the nearest school.

Alan Cameron Drake, (pictured left) the second son went off to join the British Army in May 1910 and became a sapper in the 4th Reserve Battalion, Royal Engineers. He is known to have served on the Somme. At the end of the war he transferred to the Army Reserve in March 1919. Family history records him returning to Australia a couple of years later with his wife Agnes and two children. Alan Drake enlisted in the Citizens Military Forces during World War 2 and served with the 6th Garrison Battalion here in Hobart.

Vernon Hepburn Drake was the youngest son, born in 1896. At the age of 15 he began working for James McKenzie as a joiner and was still employed there when in July 1915 he joined the AIF and was drafted to the 30th Battalion. He had spent 4 years with the naval reserve since leaving school, but chose the AIF rather than join the Navy.

The 30th Battalion was raised as part of the 8th Brigade at Liverpool in New South Wales in August 1915 with most of its recruits coming from the Newcastle region, but an entire company was composed of former RAN ratings from Victoria. Vernon may have had friends among this group and was encouraged by them to join with the 30th Battalion.

Vernon left Sydney in November 1915 and arrived in Egypt just as the Gallipoli campaign was finishing. The 30th Battalion joined the British Expeditionary Forces and were soon serving in France as part of the newly raised 5th Australian Division. The Battalion's first major battle was at Fromelles in July 1916 when Vernon was wounded in action receiving a shrapnel wound to his left arm. After treatment in England he returned to his unit and was promoted twice achieving the rank of sergeant. He was wounded for a second time in October 1917 with shrapnel wounds to his face and again evacuated to England for treatment. He returned to his unit again in January 1918. During June 1918, the 30th Battalion conducted several large raids in the Morlancourt area and it was during one of these raids that Vernon Drake was killed.



**Members of A Company, 30th Battalion ,
March 1917 Ref: AWM E00803**

Sergeant Drake was in charge of a reconnoitring patrol on the night of the 22nd /23rd June and while on patrol encountered an enemy post and the party became split up. Drake and four others reached their own lines, but when he discovered that two were missing, he immediately went out in search of them and became tangled up in barbed wire. It is surmised that the pin of a Mills grenade that he was carrying became loose and that while trying to free himself dropped the grenade. Unable to get clear of the wire, death was instantaneous with a piece of the bomb entering his body near his heart.⁶

Sgt Vernon Hepburn Drake was buried at Morlancourt British Cemetery No. 2 in France. Tree No. 443 on the Soldiers Memorial Avenue was planted in his memory. Their names appears on the Honour Roll at New Town State School.

⁴ Tasmanian Mail, 4-4-1918, Page 35, Column 5

⁵ 1907 New Town State School Admission Register – AOT ED 99/1

⁶ Service Record – National Archives of Australia.

Book Review (by Adrian Howard)

E P F Lynch, *Somme Mud: The War Experiences of an Australian Infantryman in France 1916-1919*. Edited by Will Davies. (Random House, 2006)

This is a truly wonderful book. Written in the 1920s in exercise books by a returned soldier to deal with his demons, it is one of the most realistic accounts of life at the front in the Great War one is likely to read. It reads with the pace and immediacy of a novel except that it is not. Many memoirs are written with the record in mind, and while they work as accounts, they often lack immediacy. This is most obvious in descriptions of action and it is in this that Lynch's memoir stands head and shoulders above its competitors.

The story of the book is as interesting as the book. Those exercise books lay unread for decades until after the author's death. At this point a family member passed them to a friend undertaking research (the editor) who came to realise what a gem was in his hands. The text is as written and there is barely a unit designation to be found; this is an undiluted flow of experiences and remembrances.

The perspective is that of the private soldier. There is no later attempt to place action in the larger scheme of events. That ignorance of the bigger picture takes you into the experience of the soldier scurrying across blasted landscapes trying to find trenches, outposts and headquarters fighting individual actions with little awareness or sense of larger designs or purpose. The world is populated by one's small circle of mates and a passing collection of barely remembered names and places. The action itself leaves little to the imagination and experiences are full of immediacy, tension and pace.

The book has received accolades from Bill Gammage, who compares it to *All Quiet on the Western Front*, among others. It ranks with *The Other Side of Fortune* (a novel by Frederic Manning an Australian in British uniform) and *Storm of Steel* (a memoir by Ernst Junger) as a narrative of the Great War from the trenches. Most histories and other memoirs pale in comparison: this is gripping, challenging and exciting.

The attitudes towards foreigners of all descriptions is unaffected, direct and these days decidedly unacceptable. The playful cruelty towards the 'coons' on the dock in Durban is an early shocker in this regard. Juxtaposed with that is the treatment of the 'Russian' (a mate), definitely not Anglo-Saxon and increasingly sympathetic comments on French and Germans. The attitudes develop with authentic pace as a result of experience. It is a reminder that it is easy to be judgemental in the absence of experience, and there is little reason for people of the early twentieth century to exhibit the values of the twenty-first century progressives. After all it was their experiences that helped create our values.

A cracker read.

New Postal Address

We now have a postbox at the GPO to make it more accessible to committee members, so if you need to send something to us, please address it to FOSMA, GPO Box 1867, HOBART TAS 7001

Many thanks to Duncan Kerr MHR for photocopying.

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