
Friends of Soldiers Walk Inc: Newsletter

Issue 16 December 2004

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Official Launch of the Project Hahn/Work for the Dole November 11th

The Work for the Dole crew got their day in the sun on **Thursday November 11th** with the official launch of the Soldiers Walk Restoration project at **1:30pm**. Senator Eric Abetz officially launched the project with assistance from Alderman Ron Christie from the Hobart City Council. A crowd of about 60 attended including representatives from Project Hahn, HCC employees and quite a few descendants of men of the Avenue. The event provided a good opportunity for FOSW members to meet these young people doing the work. They have shown great interest in the project that has prompted many of them to start doing their own research about the Great War and the men of the 1st AIF.



Project Hahn participants gathered around the new sign to be placed on the Avenue.

Some very kind words were said about the work undertaken thus far by members of FOSW. A long section of the Avenue was not only cleared of wattles but also slashed for the occasion providing everybody with a clear demonstration of what the Avenue will look like in the future.

Remembrance Day Ceremony: Cenotaph November 11

As part of Remembrance Day activities a wreath was laid by members of the Committee in memory of the men of the Avenue. This will become an annual act of commemoration in their memory. Many passers-by have noted the appearance of the poppies on the trees and commented on the changing appearance of the Avenue.

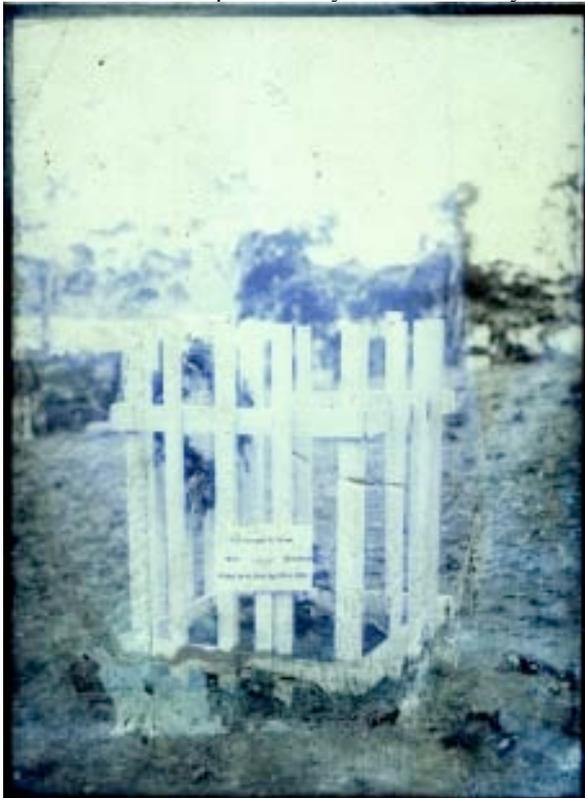
Poppy Day: Sunday November 7th

Another good turn out of about 25 for placing the poppies on the trees in preparation for Remembrance Day. The work also allowed members to see how much clearing has been carried out on the northern part of the Avenue with all the large trees (wattles mainly) having been felled. As always, white gum saplings have been retained to ensure the linkage with the surrounding white gum grasslands.



Some of the workers on the southern section of the Avenue returning after placing new poppies on each tree and removing the faded remnants of last year's poppies.

George Wood of West Hobart (below right) placing a poppy on November 7th. While this George has no relative on the Avenue, he was interested to discover he does have a namesake, Pte George Wood [Tree#402]. Pte G Wood was killed in action at Mericourt on April 26th, 1918 with the 40th Bn. He lived at 154 Davey St, was a baker and had attended Battery Point State School. He was 28 when he was killed. The picture of his tree (below left) was taken in 1919 and was provided by John Trethewey.



October 17th Working Bee



Another very successful day with over 30 members and friends turning up to do their bit. The focus for the work was once more on the riverside of the Avenue below the Magazine. The Avenue is now very quickly transforming into a recognisable formal entity and all trees are visible from the pathway. The combination of our working bees and the Project Hahn group is really transforming the Avenue. Thanks to our sponsors whose continuing assistance is of great value to our spirits and the cause; please support them as they support us.

Tasmanian Meat Wholesalers Pty. Ltd.



Also thanks to the Globe Hotel for continuing donations of brewed fluids.



Willing workers willingly working.

The Blue Gums

In the 1970s, blue gums were planted along the Avenue and while a very few are in good condition, most have not done well in what is essentially not a good environment for blue gums. As it is they also consume water that is needed by cedars. A key recommendation of the Management plan was for the removal of these trees, subject to approval from the Department of Primary Industries, Water and the Environment. This has now been obtained. This will be the most dramatic and probably controversial aspect of the changes on the Avenue. All members are urged to read the following letter carefully and explain the reasoning behind the decision to anyone who cares to listen.



4 October 2004

Andrew Robert-Tissot
Hobart City Council

DEPARTMENT of
PRIMARY INDUSTRIES,
WATER and ENVIRONMENT
Resource Management & Conservation
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Our ref :
Your ref:

Dear Andrew

I am writing in regard to the Blue-gums planted along Soldiers Memorial Avenue, Queen's Domain. As discussed on site, these Blue-gums were planted in the 1980's in the spaces between the surviving cedars. Blue-gums are not native to the Domain area, and the majority of Blue-gums are in poor health. The Soldiers Memorial Avenue Management Plan (2003) lists a total of 129 Blue-gums along the Avenue, of which one was classified in good health, 56 in average health, and the remainder in poor or very poor health. Kirkpatrick (2003) considered the removal of the Blue-gums to have no nature conservation consequences, but noted that the trees may be utilised by the Endangered Swift Parrot.

The Swift Parrot is listed as Endangered under both State and Commonwealth legislation. The Swift Parrot numbers less than 2500 mature birds in the wild. The species feeds mainly on Blue-gum and Black-gum blossom, including Blue-gums which have been artificially planted. A number of the better-quality Blue-gums along the Avenue were observed in flower during the site visit in September 2004. It is likely that the Swift Parrot would utilise the flowering trees during their breeding season in south-east Tasmania.

The proposed removal of the Blue-gums along the Avenue is likely to remove a modest quantity of potential feeding habitat for the Swift Parrot. However, the Threatened Species Unit, DPIWE, supports the proposed removal of the Blue-gums for the following reasons, and provided the removal of Swift Parrot habitat is offset by replanting of replacement Swift Parrot habitat (Blue-gum or Black-gum) in the Hobart area.

- The Blue-gums along the Avenue are not native to the site and are mostly in average to poor health. The long-term future of the Blue-gums is insecure due to the poor growing conditions at the site, and the fact that any trees that do reach a significant size are likely to become a health hazard to pedestrians along the Avenue.
- The removal of Blue-gums and the encouragement of the native White-gums and shrubs adjacent to the Avenue will re-establish the desired combination of Avenue trees and White-gum vegetation at the site.
- The Blue-gums are planted in close proximity to the cedars of the Avenue, and are likely to shade out and damage these culturally significant trees if the Blue-gums reach a large size.
- The cultural value of the Memorial Avenue is highly significant, and the long-term security of the Avenue's cedars is considered to be of primary importance at the site.

To offset the occasional loss of Swift Parrot habitat around the Hobart area, the Hobart City Council has put in place an on-going Blue-gum/Black-gum (Swift parrot habitat) replanting program for the greater Hobart area. This replanting program has led to the planting of 85 Black-gum and 150 Blue-gum over the preceding 12 months. In terms of the proposed removal of 57 moderate-good quality Blue-gums at the Memorial Avenue, the offset ratio of Blue-gum removed (n=57) to total Blue-gum/Black-gum replanted (n=185) is 1:3. Given the above considerations, this replanting ratio is considered sufficient to offset the loss of the modest quantity of Blue-gum foraging habitat at the memorial Avenue.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for any further information on this matter.

Sincerely
Dr Stephen Mallick
Swift Parrot Project Officer

An Infantryman's Day in the Front Line: Part III

In the last issue we began serialising this great chapter from Frank Green's *The Fortieth*. We re-commence the narrative at day's end and a description of a typical night's events.

An Infantryman's Day in the Front Line

About an hour before dark the meal comes up, and consists of tea and stew. After tea you begin to get ready for the night, and when the twilight comes down so that you can barely see the enemy's line, the "stand-to" begins, and the whole trench garrison stands at its posts with their rifles and Lewis guns until it is quite dark, and the order to "stand-down" is given. Through the day there has been very little movement: everybody has been quiet, and moving about as little as possible, but now it is getting dark, and observation impossible, the trenches are alive with men. Working parties are doing all kinds of repairs, and carrying parties are going past with duck-boards and wire - the material for the night's work. The scouts are starting out, and a sergeant and five scouts come to your post wearing cap-comforters instead of steel helmets, and with the butts of revolvers poking out of their respirators. They throw their lighted cigarettes away, climb over the parapet, and disappear through the wire.

After "stand-down" it is your turn to take the first two hours of sentry duty: one man remains with you, and the other five are only a few yards away in the trench. They have put a couple of sheets of iron over the trench against a traverse, and fasten waterproof sheets at the side to keep the heat in and the draught out. The brasier is then lit, and in this temporary dugout they sit around the glowing coke, waiting for their turn to stand on the fire-step. You stand on the fire-step with your head over the parapet and look into No Man's Land, and the conversation from around the brasier floats up the trench to you. You hear an argument as to what won the Hobart Cup in 1906. Then the subject gets on to dogs, and one man puts forward the claims of a dog he once had that would catch "gummy" sharks, and another man enters his sheep dog that knew the milking cows from the "drys" and so it goes on. You see something moving in front and consult your watch. You ask the corporal in charge of the post what time the night patrol should be passing, and it seems certain that this is our patrol. He comes and has a look and verifies the fact. A machine-gun opens, and the crack-crack-crack like a whip above your head makes you get your head down till the burst passes further along, cutting the top of the parapet in places. You become interested in watching the enemy very lights falling round a ditch where one of our patrols go very night, and you hear someone step up beside you on the fire step, and a voice says, "Anything doing?" It is one of the trench officers, or sometimes the commanding officer himself. You hear a crack like a distant rifle report in the enemy lines, but it is not a rifle; if it were you would not be interested: you know what it is, and look towards the sky and see a thin trail of sparks. You speculate as to who is going to get it, and the next moment you hear the unmistakable crash of a "minnie" about 200 yards away to your right. It is your business as sentry to locate the gun that threw that "minnie", so you keep a sharp eye to observe the flash of discharge of the next one, and mark down the line of it with a couple of pegs in the parapet. Perhaps it is a new position, and that case is duly reported on and observed more carefully by an officer. Or it may be an old friend, "Nellie" or "Susan" on the official list, and in that case a message is soon going over the wires from Company Headquarters to the artillery, "Give my love to Nellie." Then you watch with renewed interest to see what sort of shooting the artillery will make. Everything is soon quiet again, and you are next disturbed by someone coming into your post with a hot-box. This is cocoa and milk, and a very popular contribution from the Australian Comforts Fund. The trench officer comes along with one of the scouts, who has just come in. The scout reports seeing an enemy wiring party on the right of Willow Ditch. They ask you if there are enemy Very lights going up there: you say there are not, and point out the places whence flares have been coming, but the vicinity of Willow Ditch is not one of these places. The officer goes off, and in a few minutes the rip of our two Lewis guns indicates that the enemy party is not being allowed a peaceful job. This annoys the enemy, and he has a shot at our posts with his "minnies." More trails of sparks are seen in the sky, and several "crumps" land in your vicinity. The coke brasier is forsaken, and your mates spread out to avoid one "minnie" getting the lot. The "hate" lasts for ten minutes, and you hear the trench sergeant tell someone to go to Company Headquarters for a stretcher. You are then relieved and go and sit with the others round the brasier. You decide to sleep for a couple of hours there, and three of us go off to sleep with our backs against the trench-wall, while the other two who are going on sentry duty next silently gaze at the glow, and lose themselves in their thoughts. At midnight it is your turn for sentry duty again, and the same programme is gone through. You go back to sleep at 2 o'clock, and are just getting off to sleep for a while when suddenly our guns behind open with an intense bombardment. We all turn out and watch the wonderful sight. The whole country behind us is lit up with the flashes from our guns, and over the enemy line is a succession of crashes that almost becomes a rumble. We wonder what it is till the trench sergeant comes along and tells us it is another battalion raiding on another front a mile away. The enemy opens fire, and our sector gets its quota of high explosive shell and "minnies," and all along the front his machine guns keep up a continuous rattle, while his many-coloured flares continue to go up. This lasts for an hour, and we get tired of the display and go back to speculating on the result of the raid. We are still talking when we hear the call of "stand-to." We go into the trench and stand waiting for the dawn.

Lieutenant (William) Keith Eltham

The artwork of Keith Eltham has figured prominently in the last few newsletters and on our website at www.soldierswalk.org.au under 'memorabilia'. Keith worked as a draftsman in the City Engineers office and was well known as a cartoonist, as a sportsman and amateur singer. He enlisted on October 28, 1914 with the 3rd Artillery Brigade, 9th Battery. He lived at 297 Murray St and had attended Queens College and Hobart Technical School. He is buried in the Guards Cemetery at Lesbouefs in France. During the war he sent a stream of cards back to friends and family and supplied letters to the *Mercury* and *Tasmanian Mail*, which also published some sketches from Gallipoli and copies of Christmas cards.



This obituary appeared in the *Tasmanian Mail* on January 18 1917, p22

General regret was expressed in Hobart on Friday at the news that Lieutenant Keith Eltham had been killed in action. The deceased officer, who was very popular in Hobart, was educated at Queen's College, and for ten years was employed as a clerk in the City Engineer's office. On the outbreak of the war he enlisted at Brighton camp, and was a gunner in the 9th Battery, Field Artillery. He left Tasmania in the first troopship, and took part in the Gallipoli campaign, in which he was wounded. He rejoined the force on recovery, and was again wounded when fighting in France in September last. He was promoted to the rank of corporal, and in May received his commission as lieutenant. In sporting circles Lieutenant Eltham was well known being a prominent cricketer. He played at one time with the old Wellington Club, and on the introduction of district cricket, in 1905 he joined the West Hobart Club, with which he played until his enlistment. He was a keen player, and, while he achieved his greatest successes as a batsman, he often acquitted himself well as a change bowler. Besides playing in the North and South matches he twice represented the State against English teams, and also played against Victoria and New South Wales. He took interest in other branches of sport, and was a member of the Derwent Rowing Club. Lieutenant Eltham was also a member, and for some time secretary, of the Hobart Orpheus Club, in which he took a great interest. It was a sad coincidence that on the morning that the news was published in Hobart, a number of his old friends received from Lieutenant Eltham cards with his own drawings upon them, wishing them the season's greetings. [*Lt Alfred Thurstans Tree#378 who featured in Issue#3 was also a prominent member]*

Most of his drawings and small watercolours were made in small pocket sized sketchbooks that fitted easily in the



breast pocket of a uniform. Some of these were returned with his personal effects, which also included his paint box. One of the 'books' has its outer cover punctured by a bullet, the inner pages show the passage of the bullet from holes, to indentations and finally untouched pages: he was obviously hit by a spent round at extreme range by a sniper. This probably saved him from serious injury or death given where the book was kept. His main job in

France seems to have been as a Forward Observer and one of the most impressive watercolours is of the German lines near Fromelles from a position known as 'Melbourne Mansions' (see above).

The outlines of the sketchbook can be seen along the top of this image. The vertical lines were used as references in accurately calling the fall of shot to the artillery some miles behind the position that would be firing 'off the map'.

His correspondence was published in Tasmanian newspapers. This example was published after his death and appeared on in the Tasmanian Mail on March 1st 1917 p28.

A Letter from France

The following extract from a letter written by the late Lieut. Keith Eltham is interesting: - "But my principal item of news. Two days ago I was on duty as FOO. Just here there are few vantage points back from the firing line, so we work in the front trenches. We were in a new zone, and I was trying to get a decent spot for observation. The trenches keep no uniform shape; there were no windmill ruins or other landmarks to aid me in locating, and the infantry officer on duty proved to be particularly dull and uninformative. Then a captain of a company in reserve asked me to look at a suspected gun position of the Huns. I walked with him to a machine-gun posy, where he called for Mr Bethune. Mr B appeared, and gave a very definite description of the target - himself climbing on to the parapet to point it out. Then we took some compass bearings to fix his gun position, and he seemed so keen and well-informed that I made an appointment for that afternoon. As I returned to Battalion Headquarters I asked where the machine-gun officer, Mr Bethune, came from? I was told he was a Tasmanian, and a parson! He is the Rev Bethune - who was at St John's when I first went up there. You can imagine we had a yarn during the afternoon. It appears he joined as a private, volunteered for machine-gun section in Egypt, and was commissioned before the Pozieres stunt. And now he's a real old soldier. "A lot of chaps tell me they're sick of it, and want to go home; but I say we came here to win the war and we mean to do it! And I enjoy every minute myself!" he told me, and he certainly does seem to be quite at home, and not the least afraid of taking risks. I'd put my head up for a few moments to look at something, but he would scramble over the top and spend five minutes there! I laughed heartily several times that afternoon, just at the pure fun and novelty of the situation. I asked him to come down to the comparative luxury of our gun position for tucker tonight, but am afraid the excessive amount of rain has made a mess up above that he'll do well to paddle around to his four guns even."

Keith was killed in his dugout after coming off duty. The Red Cross file includes a number of descriptions of the circumstances, all of which consistently tell this story.

A.I.F.
1st. P.A.Bde.E.Q.

ELTHAM.
Lieut. W.K.

Killed in action 31.12.16.

"He was killed in action on Dec. 31st. about midday by shell fire and was buried the same night in a small cemetery about 1500 yds to the right of a small villiage named Flers. This little village no longer remains. The approximate co-ordinate of his grave is H. 32 D. 51-7. His death was instantaneous and he was buried by a C. of E. clergy. I collected all his personal effects and they were sent on by the usual channels to the Base". (This is a good report as my cousin was sitting beside him at the time he was killed.)

Reference Lieut. E.M. Chenery,
A.P.A.
H.Q. 1st. Art. Div.

Extract from letter to Miss A. Churnside.

London.
28.4.17.

H.

Australian Field Artillery Eltham, W.X. Lieut.
 1st Coy.
 (K. Dec 31/16. Dets D & B).

" I saw Bombardier Beet, Private Krans of the same battery, go to the help of Lieut. Eltham, who had been sleeping in a dug-out after coming off observation duty about 11 a.m. A shell came right into the roof of his dug-out and killed him instantaneously. "

Eye Witness - No. Bombardier Beet and Private Krans (same battery) told him.

Description :- Very short and had a sort of lisp.

Informant :- Pte. H. Murrey, 5477,
 3rd Bat'n Aus. Field Artillery,
 Kitchener Hospital,
 Brighton.

Home address :-
 Miesmere
 Small St,
 19. 3. 17. Woolaha,
 Mrs. Macchell. Sydney.

left
H
6 d

Keith also contributed to the ANZAC book and two of his plates feature on pages 2 and 3. Extracts from Red Cross file courtesy of Australian War Memorial Canberra.

Gen Sir William Birdwood's Visit March 1920

During 1919-1920 General Sir William Birdwood, the first commander of the ANZACs at Gallipoli and later the Australian Corps in France, visited all States and Territories. Very popular among the troops and very fond of 'his Australians' Birdwood came to Tasmania in March 1920 meeting with returned servicemen and families and unveiling many war memorials.

The event was well covered in the newspapers of the time including the local RSSILA paper, *The Tassie Digger*, a monthly publication of c30 pages. A 'monster demonstration' was held on the Queens Domain with the paper providing a full and glowing description of his speech and jokes with returned servicemen. Medals were presented to about 40 men including Military Crosses, Military Medals and a DCM and an MSM. The final act in this event: "General Birdwood also planted a tree in the Soldiers Memorial Avenue, and, after chatting for some time longer with the soldiers, he drove off along the Memorial Avenue." (*The Tassie Digger*, March 1920 p10.)

The tree (#34) has not survived; another victim of roadwork, being planted alongside the Avenue proper and in the middle of what is now the underpass road swooping under the Tasman Highway.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New year to all.

2005 should turn out to be a very big year with the priority being the launch of our fundraising campaign and the placement of the first new plaques. Project Hahn is applying for funding for a continuation project on the Avenue, which should see the wonderful physical changes continuing. The Hobart City Council is continuing its work propagating new trees and it is hoped these experiments are successful so that in a few short years we will also see the planting of new trees to replace the dead and missing. Also on the agenda will be the development of interpretation and landscape plans defining the layout and look of a restored Avenue.

hill street grocer

PAESANO
 Pizza & Pasta

A big thanks to Duncan Kerr's office for photocopying.

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