

Friends of Soldiers Walk Inc: Newsletter

Issue 2 August 2002

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84th Anniversary Working Bee

August 3rd marked the 84th anniversary of the first planting on Soldiers Walk and about 40 volunteers got stuck in and did a massive clearance on the northern half of the Walk. We were blessed by fine weather despite the worrying forecast and effort was rewarded by a barbeque at the Victoria Gunpowder Magazine.



The clean up was done with the permission of the Hobart City Council who allowed the removal of weeds and competing vegetation within 3 metres of each tree. The clean up was helped and directed on the day by a Council Bush care officer, Jim Strawbridge, who did a fine job in instructing us. It was particularly tough on him because many of

the shrubs and saplings we removed were natives such as wattles and small gums. Thanks for the assistance John and thanks again to the Council.

Doug Parkinson MLC and Duncan Kerr MHR joined us and really put in. Apologies were received from Senators Abetz and Calvert, our Deputy Lord Mayor Pru Bonham and Alderman Peter Sexton; all had other commitments.



Thanks must also go to Brian Morey of AMS Hire and Coates Wreckair for arranging and providing a portalo, and to Barbeques Galore for loaning a brand new and very fine barbie for us. Robin Black and Kathryn Wakefield did a great job in cooking up the snags and burgers from Shane's Meats and Treats. Thanks also to Rod Hunt for the beer.

We got great coverage with a radio interview on the Tuesday morning with Ric Paterson on 936, news coverage on ABCTV and WIN on the Saturday night, a story in the Sunday Tasmanian and more ABC radio coverage on Sunday.

A great success all round. One can now walk along the northern section and actually see very tree on those outer rows. Very simple and very dramatic. Another clean up will be organised for early October to work on the southern section from the start of the Walk up to the magazine.

Trees now labelled



A small party of eager volunteers spent the afternoon of Saturday July 6th up on the Domain putting small number and name labels next to each tree. The numbering system used was from a Council map we think may date from the 1920s. It is not topographically accurate but at least provides a layout of the trees and the individual soldiers commemorated. There are some trees listed as

'unknown' and we are tracking them down. A separate process of compiling a list of names is nearing completion. This has been using the plinth list (from the plinths near the Aquatic Centre), the names on the map, names listed in *The Mercury* in July 1918 and the program. Comparison has revealed a number of names that are missing from the plinths and the map.



On the day, the party divided into four groups and labelled trees below the Powder Magazine; one row per group. We soon discovered that the map was not to be taken literally except as a listing of the trees in order up a row. Gaps appear in the strangest of places on the map that had more to do with the making of the map than reality on the ground.

Over the following week, Darby Quinn did a sterling job in finishing off the northern end with a little help from the President. The labelling is part of the process of not only logging the remaining trees but also ends their anonymity. Already we can guide people to particular soldiers trees. In the future it will allow the unlocking of the story of the Walk and the soldiers it commemorates as distinct individuals.

Working with Council

The Working group will resume meetings in the next few weeks to get on with the management plan. The Council and its officers are very supportive and we are becoming partners in this enterprise, which is good for everybody and great for the future of the Walk.

MacKillop and the Walk

Adrian Howard and John Trethewey went to MacKillop College on Thursday August 8th. John presented part of his extensive collection of photos and memorabilia. Adrian talked about the Soldiers Walk. The interest stems from two groups at the school studying some aspect of world War One. One group is tracking their own relatives and in this group, a superb photo album came to light. It includes original shots of Gallipoli, Egypt and the UK.

The second group is the Gifted and Talented group who are working with the Principal Craig Deayton on the history of the 47th Bn. This has never been written as the Battalion was reduced to one company by casualties in the German offensive of 1918 and was disbanded. After the war, only 170 men could be found for a final unit photograph. The students are researching individual service records for soldiers in the 47th Bn, especially Tasmanians who formed about 25% of the Battalion. 10 of these men are on the Soldiers Walk. Later in the day, the students were given a short tour of the Walk and taken to two trees of 47th Bn soldiers. The Mercury attended but alas no story was forthcoming. The exhibition and research work was covered by WinNews.

How it all started: Mercury reports of 1918

The following extracts from the Mercury in June, July and August provide some interesting insights into the original vision for Soldiers Walk. The exact number of trees planted on the first day is here given as 429 with the original plan being for 330. A further 50 were added to the list and planted, and paid for, by the New Town Council. The program for the day lists 395 names (with two repeats!). The Mercury listed about the 50 New Town names and c340 names and trees. There are gaps in the list numbers and repeat numbers in these listings, as well some soldiers get a name but no number. Some are listed on the program but not in the paper. To further complicate the picture, a handful of soldiers got two trees! A few more puzzles to sort but this now down to a handful.

Comparison of these sources revealed a few names missing from the plinths and the Council map. Nice to find them and they are now being tracked to trees. Positions can be confirmed once we have cracked the Mercury list pattern. There are some spelling and initial differences between the lists as well just to add some spice.

The Mercury Saturday June 22, 1918 p7

AVENUE OF HONOUR

TODAY'S DIGGING OPERATIONS ON THE DOMAIN

Preparations are now complete for to-day's ceremony in connection with the planting of trees on the Domain to form an avenue of honour in memory of the Tasmanians who have made the supreme sacrifice on the various fronts in connection with the world war. The proposed avenue, which has been pegged out in readiness for to-day's digging operations is to commence at the town end of the Domain, near the lane leading to the University, and from here to the South African monument there will be only a single row of trees, but from the monument towards Government House there will be two rows, and along part of the route three rows of trees, the ground in between being planted with wattle, West Australian gums, hardy annuals, and flowering shrubs, space being reserved for a seven foot path between. The total length of the avenue will be about a mile. The trees, all cedars, are being provided by the City Council, and have been purchased from Ballarat. The arrangements for to-day's digging operations are in the hands of Mr G. Foster, M.H.A., the general secretary of the Tasmanian branch of the R.S.S.I.L.A, and Mr. L. Collis, the assistant secretary, who have been promised the assistance of several hundred other returned soldiers, rejected volunteers, and other helpers. The returned soldiers are asked to fall in at the Dug-Out, City Hall, at 2 o'clock, and will march via Macquarie Street, Elizabeth Street, and Liverpool Street, to the Domain, whilst a number of soldiers from Claremont camp will come in by train, and the rejected volunteers will assemble on the Domain. Picks and shovels are being supplied by the Ordnance Department, and it is hoped that close on a thousand young men will participate in digging the 317 holes required, that being the number of Tasmanians who have made the supreme sacrifice. A list of these has been prepared, and the name and rank of each is to be placed on a panel bearing the colours of the battalion, over which the lettering will be painted in corresponding colours. These nameplates will be placed alongside the trees, inside the tree guards, and no fear is expressed that these will not be held sacred, and be left undamaged, so that in years to come the Avenue of Honour will be a source of pride to the State. The general public are asked to provide light refreshments for the diggers, who will commence operations at 2.30, and continue until about 5 o'clock. The first tree planted will be in honour of the first Australian who was killed at Gallipoli, and the first row will be in memory of those who were killed in 1914.[sic]

Yesterday His Excellency the Governor (Sir Francis Newdegate), who was accompanied by the Hon. W. M. Williams, M.L.C., and the superintendent of reserves (Mr. Lipscombe) visited the site of the proposed avenue, and His Excellency expressed his satisfaction at the way in which it had been laid out, and intimated that the Hon. Lady Newdegate and himself would deem it an honour to associate themselves with the preparations for the ceremony.

The Mercury Saturday June 29, 1918 p

SOLDIER'S MEMORIAL AVENUE

A great turn-out is expected to-day to complete the work of digging holes for the official tree-planting of the soldier's memorial avenue on July 27. As already notified, a number of firms are to be represented by their employees. The president of the Cricket Association calls on all members to attend, and other sporting and athletic bodies will be represented. Probably some of the footballers playing on the Domain may come along. The State Commandant has called a voluntary parade of the Militia Forces. Returned Soldiers are expected in full force, and picks and shovels will be provided near the upper cricket ground. All ladies who can bring a basket of cakes or scones, sandwiches, etc., are invited to do so. The Y.W.C.A. ladies' committee will provide tea. Mr. George Foster will be found near the cricket ground to give all information.

The Mercury Monday July 1, 1918 p4

**THE SOLDIER'S AVENUE
DELVING ON THE DOMAIN
MOVING SCENES**

A stranger finding himself on the eastern slopes of the Queen's Domain on Saturday might well have imagined that he had been transported suddenly into the midst of war. All along the slopes, a line about sixty yards wide, as far as the eye could see, swarmed with people busily using pick and shovel. They were working with might and main as if it were urgently necessary to "dig in" before the enemy arrived. Red war had brought them there - they were digging in preparation for the planting of the Soldiers Avenue, which is to commemorate for ever Hobart's brave and fallen in the battlefields of Europe and Asia. Each tree will represent a fallen soldier, and appropriately enough it will be a cedar, celebrated in all ages for beauty and longevity, venerated by many Eastern peoples, and regarded by the Hindoos as sacred.

Those who visited the Domain expecting to come upon a merry scene found something very different, something that in a curious way touched them sharp and deep. The spectators talked without raising their voices, and moved sedately about as if they were present at an imposing ceremony. And there were scenes that must have brought their hearts to their throats, and dimmed their eyes. It was a bright, sunny day, and the spectacle from the Domain hill, with the flowing river below, sweeping away to the right and left, and the eastern suburbs and the hilly landscape to the horizon beyond, made for brisk enjoyment that did not come. There was a curious blend of calm and cheerfulness and soberness of mien in the people that one rarely sees.

On the first digging day there was a lack of volunteers, and it was recorded that one old lady had sprung into the breach and used pick and shovel. Her noble

example seems to have shot through the community like an inspiration, for on Saturday there was an extraordinary development. Scores of families had resolved that no hands but theirs should dig the ground for the memorial trees of their sons and brothers. Thus it happened that though hundreds of picks and shovels had been provided, there was a shortage. Volunteer workers there were in plenty, and there were holes for them to dig but in the majority of cases it was father and mother, and brothers and sisters that worked, and wanted the help of none. It was hard digging and picking too, mostly on stony ground, and the soil stiff clay. Navvies would have found it easy, and but that it was indeed a labour of love most of the diggers would have found it far beyond their powers. Hundreds of them will have strained muscles and aching bones for days from it, but they did not flinch, for indeed were their lost boys not game?

And they worked with utter lack of self consciousness, heedless of the onlooker, the flame of zeal in their faces, and those waiting on the brink eager for their turn. At one place father used the pick, and the mother and the daughter shovelled in their turn. There was a father wielding a pick, and his children the spade. Brothers and sisters in many cases broke into the hallowed ground, and in other cases widows and sweethearts took part in the laborious task. Two aged men, probably grandfathers, were working together to rear to a grandson a memorial tree that they will never see grow much above the guards. And so it was all along the line, those who what mourned for their dead heroes finding easement to their sore hearts in giving them a place of honour in the memorial avenue. There are already 330 trees to be planted in memory of as many of Hobart's sons who have given their lives in order that Freedom may reign in the world. Some may not have fully understood to what they had put their hands when they enlisted, for many of them did not think beyond cricket and football and other games, but their letters all show that at the front they understood that they had answered the right call, and would not have turned back if they could. They went forward, and rounded off their lives with self sacrifice in the noblest of causes, and now something of their elevation of spirit is reflected in their families. And so fathers and mothers and others of kith and kin picked and dug in honour of those of their blood that had not lived futile lives entirely to self as so many do, but had fought the good fight, and borne themselves as true men, even to the death.

It was a great thought that our dead soldiers should each have a memorial that would carry his name and deeds and honours won down to posterity, for those to come after us will have cause to bless them. The Soldier's Avenue, too, will be a memorial fit for Kings and Emperors. On its sweep along the eastern slopes of Domain Hill it will occupy a glorious site, one not to be surpassed in the whole world for variety and beauty of scenery. There, too, should be placed the monuments that will be erected in honour of our infantry battalions, our artillery units, our Light Horse our airmen, and our sailors. Starting from that most perfect of monuments erected to the memory of the men that fell in South

Africa, Soldier's Avenue should in course of time be adorned with memorials of Hobart's heroes, and become a consecrated grove in which poets will find inspiration.

Today the Avenue consists of heaps of broken earth and stones torn out by loving hands, with a sprinkling of ragged, indigenous trees. The digging has not yet been completed, and the workers have to return. And the tale will not be complete until the German hordes have been defeated, and our victorious soldiers have come home. Until then the digging will go on, so that every life given by the city for the world's freedom may have a lasting record in our midst, though the clay to which it belonged lies in the stricken battlefield, or in a grave in the homeland. General Currie, the commander of the Canadian troops in an order issued before his men went into battle in the great German offensive, said:- " To those who fall I say, You will not die but step into immortality. Your mothers will not lament your fate but will be proud to have borne such sons. Your names will be revered for ever by your grateful country, and God will take you unto Himself."



[photo of Sgt Foster and party allotting sites just by the South African memorial; Tasmanian Mail 27/6/1918]

THE WORKING BEE

Thousand of people turned out to witness and assist in the preparation being made by relatives and friends for the memorial trees to be planted when the avenue is officially opened on July 27. The crowd was

far greater than on the previous Saturday, and it is estimated that between 6,000 and 7,000 persons were present. Those engaged in digging the tree holes included all classes of the community - politicians, military officers, lawyers, office clerks, artisans, labourers, and schoolboys. Hundreds of women and young girls wielded pick and shovel with success, and at some spots whole families were engaged in the work. Sorting societies were represented by old and young men anxious to do their bit towards perpetuating the memory of an old comrade who had given his life in the Empire's cause.

The progress made on Saturday was substantial, and some 320 squares are completed, the line now extending beyond the junction of the three roads beyond the powder magazine. The Superintendent of the City Reserves (Mr. L. J. Lipscombe) was again in attendance, and personally supervised the

proceedings, and Staff-Sergt. Foster, M.H.A., gave all information as to numbers, plots, etc. The supply of picks and shovels was not equal to the demand, and the 200 of each were quickly applied for. Mr. Lipscombe, who is the "father" of the Avenue of Honour, has in contemplation the placing of flower beds and shrubberies etc, at various spots, and his desire that the avenue should not be converted into a drive will receive general endorsement. It is a matter for regret to hear that during the week some evil-minded person removed many of the pegs, and caused the superintendent a deal of extra work and trouble in replacing them.

A pleasing feature about Saturday's working bee was the arrival of a battalion of employees from H. Jones and Co's IXL factory, numbering over 50, and they did splendidly. Senator Earle again did his share, and a prominent military officer kept pace with several younger in years. At one plot an old man, who looked as if he has passed the allotted span, worked on his own, and inquiry elicited the information that the spot where he was engaged digging was a portion of his son's favourite playground when a youngster. Work was continued with much vigour and enthusiasm up till 5 o'clock, when this afternoon's operations closed.



Digging the holes Tasmanian Mail 27/6/1918

The commissariat department was in full swing on Saturday. The Y.M.C.A. Scouts were there with a field kitchen, under the command of Scoutmaster Stevens. Mrs Forster supervised the dispensing of the tea (the tea and sugar having been given by firms in the city), and Alderman A.C. Davis saw that the fires

were 'kept burning' and supplies sent out to workers all along the line. A tent was provided for the refreshments, a large number of sympathisers having forwarded large supplies of cakes, pies, etc. Mrs Rolls was in charge here, and her staff consisted of the following ladies, who thoughtfully paraded the avenue and handed out the refreshments to the workers: - Mesdames D. Young, H.J. James, Tennant, Lowe, Thurston, Oldmeadow, and Wickens; Misses Plane (2), Corfield, McWilliams, Dashington, Grubb, Dobbie, Burgess, Elliot, Gillon, Baker, Wickens, and Lacey.

The Labour Fife and Drum Band thoughtfully played their part, under the leadership of Bandmaster J. Slater. They submitted a musical programme of

patriotic airs, and also played "Onward, Christian Soldiers," concluding with "God Save the King."

The work will be continued next Saturday afternoon.

The Mercury Friday July 5, 1918 p7

THE MEMORIAL AVENUE

The work of digging in Soldiers' Avenue in Queen's Domain is to be carried out on Saturday next. Already a great number of fresh inquiries have been made, and fresh help has been promised. Mr. Taylor, cartage contractor, has offered the use of three horses and drays for any work required. Picks and shovels will be found as usual. The New Town Council has been in communication with the Hobart City Council for the purpose of making arrangements to perpetuate the memory of fallen men from New Town. This has been agreed to, and lists of New Town enlistments of men who have died are being prepared, and will be available at an early date. Mr. Foster, M.H.A., desires us to point out that the cost of the avenue is being borne by the rate-payers of the Hobart Corporation (in which New Town will now share). The R.S.S.I.L.A. is merely assisting the council, and cannot grant any requests for consideration of the claims of men whose next-of-kin reside outside these areas. Several leading citizens, however, are interested in a scheme for planting an avenue from Launceston to Hobart to commemorate the enlistment of every Tasmanian soldier. Later on it is intended to approach the Government in this regard, as it is felt it would be of great interest to tourists, as well as a memorial to Tasmania's sons.

The Mercury Monday July 15, 1918 p7

THE SOLDIERS' AVENUE

On Saturday afternoon the army of city workers who assembled in the Domain to resume the digging for the trees that are to be planted along the Soldiers' Avenue in memory of those who have given their lives for the Empire was considerably augmented by a large contingent from New Town, the council of which municipality has joined hands with the City Council in continuing the avenue from a point just beyond the powder magazine. Digging went on with great zest until the heavy rain compelled a cessation. Parties of ladies paid little heed to the order to cease work, and kept on until the military officers came out and collected the picks and shovels. Many of the diggers were drenched. The Y.M.C.A. Scouts were again present, under Scoutmaster Stevens, and provided tea, etc. The bugle band was also present. There were several private tea supplies and the ladies of New Town were there in strong force dispensing the refreshing beverage. There will be further work at the avenue next Saturday.

The Mercury Monday July 22, 1918 p7

THE SOLDIERS' AVENUE

There was another large muster of volunteer workers on the Domain on Saturday afternoon, when the last few holes were excavated in connection with the Soldier's Memorial Avenue, which is to be formally opened on August 3 and good progress was made with the construction of the tree guards. Other "cleaning-up" work was also executed in preparation of the opening ceremony, and the afternoon being fine, for a change excellent progress was made. Light refreshments were served by the ladies' auxiliary of the Y.M.C.A, and distributed by the Boy Scouts, an attention which the workers greatly appreciated. Another batch of volunteers is asked to attend next Saturday afternoon, when the preparation will be completed.

The Mercury Monday July 22, 1918 p7

MEMORIAL AVENUE

NAMES OF THE FALLEN SOLDIERS

THE WORK COMPLETED

[Along with a list of names and tree numbers (which have been entered into the database), the following comments were made.]

There was again a large attendance of volunteers on the Domain on Saturday afternoon for the purpose of completing the final arrangements in connection with the Soldiers' Memorial Avenue. Many had brought hammers in order to construct the remainder of the tree guards, but it was found no nails had been supplied, and therefore this section of the work will be completed during the week, in time for the formal ceremony which takes place on Saturday afternoon. It is hoped that any omission from the above list of names, or alterations, will at once be supplied by relatives to the returned soldiers headquarters, City-hall, so that they can be rectified before Saturday.

The Mercury Monday August 5, 1918

HOBART'S SOLDIERS' AVENUE

CEREMONY OF THE TREE PLANTING

A SUCCESSFUL FUNCTION

SPEECH BY THE CHIEF JUSTICE

There have been many celebrations in Hobart, but none so impressive as that which gathered on the Domain on Saturday for the planting of the Memorial Avenue. All creeds and classes, sharing the same sorrows, and bound together by the same deep set bonds of love and nationality as weld their heroic sons were represented. Mothers and fathers in mourning for loved ones resting on lonely hillsides at Gallipoli and the rural cemeteries of France, had healing wounds reopened. The atmosphere was heavy with

"The grief that knows no tears
When the battle is lost or won."

At every tree there were touching incidents. At one returned men filled the earth in memory of a "digger" who had nobody here to do it for him, no friends but the friends of his dugout and the trenches. At Lieut. Hare's tree, his tiny mite of a nephew, four months old, assisted by his uncle, heaped the earth round it while his soldier uncles and many friends who knew him well in Hobart looked on. Feeble old ladies and gentlemen, hand in hand attended to others, and with the 429 trees planted were the same sorrowful scenes.

Each tree is enclosed in a guard, and bears a board upon which is painted the soldier's battalion colours, the date of his death, and his name. The planting was completed by 5 o'clock, but along the winding and undulating course of the avenue little knots remained until dusk like groups of pilgrims.

During the afternoon, the Y.M.C.A. entertained the vice-regal party, the distinguished visitors, and the returned soldiers to afternoon tea on two large marquees. Lady Doris Blackwood planted the first tree at the head of the avenue. Each group acted on its own initiative, and there was progressive planting.

Who Was Sgt Foster?

Initial findings by Tony Harrison

The man commonly linked to the establishment of Soldiers Walk was George Matthew Foster (1884-1956). He was born in Grey Ward, South Australia and his father owned a fish shop. Young George went to school in Hobart and then served an apprenticeship to become a motor mechanic.

He was nineteen when the First World War started where he served as a trooper in the Third Light Horse having enlisted on the 31st of August 1914 and serving for 2 years and 3 months.¹ Broinowski also records him as being appointed Secretary of the Hobart Branch of the RSL in June 1918. (He was probably the third person to fill that role after the Returned Soldiers Association was formed in 1916.) He was also Secretary of the Totally and Permanently Disabled Soldiers Association. In 1917 he resigned those positions to enter politics.

Sgt Foster was elected to the House of Assembly in June 1917 for the seat of Denison. After one term in the Tasmanian Parliament he stood for the Senate and was elected in 1920. According to the *Bulletin* (18 September 1935) the new 'Digger Senator' from Tasmania was quickly disillusioned with the National Parliament, like many of the returned soldiers who entered at the same time. 'When he was a politician his name was synonym for lethargy ... post war lethargy got the better of him. He grew to hate the job and was rarely seen in his place

¹ L Broinowski *Tasmania's War Record 1914-1918* Hobart 1925

in the House. Bets were made that he would overstay his leave and suffer the ignominy of having his seat declared vacant.' He resigned from the Senate four months before the 1925 election.

Foster moved to Sydney where we worked for 'a land agency'. In Sydney he established a friendship with the charismatic Anglican clergyman, Robert Hammond. Canon Hammond (1870-1946) was an evangelist and social reformer known as a 'mender of broken men'. He was President of Temperance Society from 1916 to 1946. Whether Foster had been broken by his war experiences and eight years as a politician I don't know; perhaps he was drawn to Hammond by a mutual interest in temperance and social reform. In any case the *Bulletin* labelled him 'one of busiest men in Sydney' in 1939. In association with Hammond he had 'found his mission and regained all the energy of his youth'.

In 1908 Hammond had established the first Hammond Hotel to rehabilitate destitute men. By 1933 he had built eight of them and had another 'family hotel' in Glebe. In 1939 Foster, as Superintendent of Hammond Hotels, was in the process of building another 10-storey hotel in Hunter Street. He was also Secretary of the Hammondsville Homes Trust. It had been established in 1933 and by 1937 had built 100 homes on land at Liverpool for unemployed men with a family and at least three children.

Foster died in Sydney on 6 June 1956 leaving a wife Vera and a daughter. As yet, nothing has been discovered about his life after 1939.

**Next Issue: The full authoritative list of names.
The Chief Justice's speech**

The Committee

The Committee formed last year consists of:

Adrian Howard	President
John Trethewey and Darby Quinn	Vice Presidents
Rod Hunt	Secretary and Public Officer
Kirsty Black	Treasurer
Lynne Fitzgerald, Tony Peck	Committee Member

We have room for more on the Committee. All nominations should be directed to Rodney Hunt as Public Officer c/o 11 Franklin St, West Hobart.

Annual General Meeting: Monday August 25th 7:30 pm Theatre, Philip Smith Centre, Glebe

Contact Details: note the phone number and e-mail address have changed.

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