

Friends of Soldiers Walk Inc: Newsletter

Issue 20 July 2005

Highlights

87th Anniversary August 3rd : Dedication of Plaques
52nd Bn Mouquet Farm
Pte Frank Evans



Dates to remember

Date: dedication of plaques August 3rd followed by reception for descendants at Government House.

More Plaques to be Dedicated

August 3rd is the 87th anniversary of the first plantings on the Avenue and this year will be a big day on the Avenue, the biggest probably since the early years of the Avenue.

The first new trees will be planted on the Avenue at the southern end near the Aquatic Centre. These trees have been propagated by the Hobart City Council nursery, under the direction of the HCC arboriculturalists Andrew Robert-Tissot. These are early experimental trees with the main stock of replacement not likely to be ready for planting for at least 3 to 4 years. The two trees will replace missing trees at 45 and 49. *The trees will be planted by our patron, His Excellency William Cox, Governor of Tasmania, and the Lord Mayor Rob Valentine.* There are a number of trees missing on the lower row near the Aquatic Centre; all were lost due to roadwork associated with building the underpass and turnoffs for the Cenotaph and Aquatic Centre. These 2 trees, unlike most missing sites on the Avenue, can be replaced in close proximity to the original sites. A landscape plan is being drawn up to identify their replacement sites along the Avenue.

There will also be 40 new plaques dedicated on the Avenue. These dedications will occur in three separate groups on August 3rd.

Group 1: 9 plaques from 12:00 to 12:30 (northern section)

399 Gnr Archie Flexmore	12 th Bde AFA	Died of wounds	18/9/1917
370 Gnr Arthur Roy Edwards	12 th Bde AFA	Killed in action	21/3/1918
352 Sgt Oliver Page	12 th Bn	Died of sickness	27/11/1917
343 Lt Len Wadsley	52nd Bn	Killed in action	3/9/1916
331 Pte William Andrewartha	47 th Bn	Died of wounds	5/8/1916
328 Pte Alf Cahill	40 th Bn	Killed in action	13/10/1917
296 Spr Gilbert Young	6 th Fld Co Eng	Killed in action	17/9/1917
296 Gnr Gilbert Eddington	13 th Bde AFA	Killed in action	1/10/1917
283 L/Cpl Spencer Pedder DCM	6 th Bn	Died of wounds	20/9/1917

Group 2: 10 plaques from 12:35 to 1:15 (southern section below TCA)

255 Cpt Arthur Appleby	12 th Bn	Killed in action	6/5/1917
243 Pte Reader MM	12 th Bn	Killed in action	15/4/1917
206 Cpt Guy Bailey	52nd Bn	Killed in action	28/3/1917
185 Lt William Keith Eltham	1 st Bde AFA	Killed in action	31/12/1916
183 Pte Walter Ibbott	12 th Bn	Died of sickness	26/12/1916
155 Pte George Pilcher	12 th Bn	Killed in action	18/9/1918
124 Pte Frank Kent-Newbold	12 th Bn	Killed in action	19/8/1916
107 Spr Albert Lighten	15 th Fd Co Eng	Died of wounds	4/8/1916
105 L/Cpl Harry Morey MM	14 th Fd Ambulance	Killed in action	1/9/1918
88 Pte Daniel Quinn	26 th Bn	Killed in action	29/7/1916

Group 3: 23 plaques from 1:30pm. Southern section across Davies Ave from Aquatic Centre. It is essential that all attending are on site and in place by 1:30pm. His Excellency will arrive at 1:45pm sharp at which time the ceremony will commence. It is scheduled to finish by 2:15 at the latest to allow time for all those attending the Government House reception to proceed to Government House for a 2:30 start.

19 Pte James McDevitt	4 th Bn	Died of wounds	19/5/1915
20 Pte Eric Kirk	12 th Bn	Died of wounds	26/4/1915
21 Cpl Clarence Maine	15 th Bn	Died of wounds	27/5/1915
25 Pte Gerald Allsebrook	1 st Clearing Hospital	Died of wounds	20/6/1915
27 Pte William Haynes	12 th Bn	Died of wounds	6/8/1915
28 Pte Errol Cleary	15 th Bn	Killed in action	7/8/1915
29 Pte Percy Rex	15 th Bn	Died of wounds	24/5/1915
30 Pte William Thickins	15 th Bn	Killed in action	8/8/1915
32 L/Cpl Vernon Wickins	15 th Bn	Killed in action	8/8/1915
35 Pte George Harding	15 th Bn	Killed in action	9/8/1915
36 Pte Frederick Lange	12 th Bn	Killed in action	8/8/1915
39 Pte Thomas Connel	12 th Bn	Died of wounds	8/8/1915
40 Pte Claude Jack	12 th Bn	Died of wounds	24/7/1916
43 Pte Richard Lawler	15 th Bn	Killed in action	9/8/1915
44 L/Cpl Harold Ward	12 th Bn	Killed in action	11/8/1915
47 Cpl Hobart Seymour	3 rd Light Horse	Died of wounds	12/8/1915
48 Pte Harry Rafton	18 th Bn	Killed in action	22/8/1915
51 Dvr Sydney McLeod	10 th Co AASC	Died of wounds	August 1915
52 Pte James Fisher	26 th Bn	Died of pneumonia	7/10/1915

August is the 90th anniversary of the deaths of many of these men. Generally speaking the avenue was planted in rough order of death, though some trees are out of sequence.

The main exceptions to this are:

- the outer row on the river side, planted in February 1919 and mainly commemorating men who died from mid 1918 onwards
- the outer row on the riverside from the magazine to the top end of the Avenue was planted by the New Town Council. There is no strict chronology within this section.
- Trees at the very top rows of the Avenue were planted in Feb 1919 and do not reflect a strict chronology.

Outer row, river side; originally planted 15/2/1919

37 Pte Robert Wiggins	12 th Bn	Killed in action	11/8/1918
41 Cpl Robert Lewis	40 th Bn	Killed in action	12/8/1918
45 Cpl Jesse Adams	12 th Bn	Died of sickness	15/11/1918
49 Pte George Limbrick	26 th Bn	Died of wounds	15/8/1918

Unassociated plaques. At the request of families, 2 other plaques will be dedicated for men whose trees and sites are missing under Crossroads Oval. New sites are yet to be identified and the plaques will be placed on site when this occurs.

434 Lt Arnold Wertheimer	12 th Bn	Killed in action	4/6/1918
429 Pte Adrian Husband	7 th Fd Amb	Died of sickness	12/7/1916

Government House Reception: invitations will have already been received by persons registered as descendants of men on the Avenue. If we did not know that you were a descendant, you would not have received an invitation. If only one person in the household was named on the invitation, it is because only one person is registered as a member and paying subscriptions. Provision has been made for the inclusion of partners where these were known; if you wish to take your partner or a carer, you will need to contact Government House to register them. It is not possible at this stage to extend the invitation list any further due to the numbers attending.

Wet Weather plan: the event will proceed regardless of weather. If rain seems likely some shelter will be arranged.

Transport: for groups 1 and 2 dedications, transport along the Avenue will be arranged. Groups of descendants will meet at the car park at the northern end of the TCA and be transported to the appropriate trees. We will try to arrange for transport down to the main ceremony and back to the carpark at the TCA afterwards.

All direct descendants of men being commemorated on August 3rd will be contacted with a more detailed outline of arrangements in the week before the event.

Pte Frank Hubert Evans

Pte Frank Evans was an early enlistment, joining up on 20th October 1914. He signed up with the 15th Bn as an 'original' with a regimental number of 1030. By occupation a farm student, he had attended Queens College and was the son of Hubert and Emily Evans of the Highbury Private Hospital in Hobart. He had been a cadet before the war like many of his contemporaries under the compulsory military training scheme that commenced in 1911. Two brothers served in the 8th Light Horse. He joined up at the age of 19, and would have required parental permission. His address was given as 'Highbury



Hospital 'care of his mother while his next of kin was listed as 'Hughie Evans GPO Sydney NSW'.

D Company of the battalion was comprised of Tasmanians and commanded by Major Eccles Snowden who after his return to Tasmania was to become a State President of the RSL and Lord Mayor of Hobart. The 15th Bn embarked on 22nd December 1914 and was to land on the Gallipoli peninsula on 25th April late in the day with some troops actually spending the day on a transport off Cape Hellas and witnessing the carnage at Y Beach and in particular the aftermath of the landing from the *River Clyde*.

Many of the 15th Bn men represented on the Avenue died during August 1915 in the offensives of that month. Right along the Anzac line attacks were mounted at Lone Pine, the Nek, German Officers Trench and so on. In a number of cases, the Roll of Honour circulars completed by families in the 1920s give 'Lone Pine' as a place of death. That and the attack at the Nek were and still are the best known. The 15th Bn however was doing its dying elsewhere. It fought as part of the New Zealand and Australian Division (2

brigades NZ plus the 4th Australian Bde). The Brigade (13th to 16th Bns) was committed to the north of the main beachhead in a manoeuvre to capture Chunuk Bair and link with the English troops landing at Suvla Bay. The Brigade became lost in the confusion of gullies and spurs and a messy series of actions over a number of days and nights followed.

The following letter and photograph were supplied by John Evans. This letter is unusual in that it is written on the day of his death before the main manoeuvre began. In the days to follow, many simply disappeared with deaths not recorded for up to a week afterwards and letters to next of kin only penned when the tempo of the fighting had once more dropped away.

Dear Mrs Evans

It is with feelings of the deepest regret that I write to inform you that the death of your son has just been reported to me and to express to you my sympathy and that of his other comrades. He was hit by pellets from a shrapnel shell and passed peacefully away about a quarter of an hour afterwards adding another name to the list of brave fellows we can so ill afford to lose. During the time he has been in this Company he has been a good soldier and has been held in the highest esteem by all ranks and if you could hear the expressions of sympathy, I feel that your sorrow in your loss would be greatly lessened.

Any articles of value in his possession will be forwarded to you through the Base records office but if there is anything further I can do for you please write me or better still address officially to the Officer Commandant 15th Bn as one never knows from hour to hour who is to be spared and who taken.

*Your son's body will be interred in the cemetery at Anzac Cove by an Anglican chaplain.**

I regret I cannot write you at greater length but the conditions under which we are living don't give opportunity for letter writing and I ask you to understand that this note carries more feeling than it may appear to. I know what a shock this news will be to you but I ask you to be heartened by the fact that he died as all true soldiers would wish – for his King and country.

With deepest sympathy

Believe me dear Mrs Evans

Yours sincerely

P Eccles Snowden.

* He was buried in what is now known as Ari Burnu Cemetery Row B Grave 27.

[It is interesting to note the use of the phrase 'write you' quite common at the time but now regarded as ungrammatical, American usage.]

Tasmanian Community Fund

An application was submitted to the Tasmanian Community Fund for a grant of \$88,500. This includes funds for 80 plaques and financial support for their installation, contacting families and coordination. The balance of the grant will be used for a Tasmanian Avenues project and focus on producing a how to kit for other communities around Tasmania as well as working with 10 communities to revive local Avenues and refine the kit. The Kit would then be available for use throughout Tasmania and will also have Australia wide applicability.

TreeNet Symposium

TreeNet is a national network of horticulturalists, arboriculturalists, planners and academics committed to the promotion and study of trees in urban environment. A not-for-profit organisation, it is based at the University of Adelaide arboretum. In 2004 its annual symposium discussed and adopted a goal for the restoration of Avenues of Honour by 2015. Adrian Howard has been invited to address their symposium in September on the achievements and lessons from the Soldiers Memorial Avenue project. This is clear recognition of just how far ahead we are on a national level in dealing with the process of restoration.

Current Work on the Avenue

A work programme for the Avenue over the next few months has been worked out with the Hobart City Council. The whole Avenue has been brush cut meaning a return to the pre-1980s look of a mown Avenue. It is now quite noticeable from the Tasman Highway. The focus will now shift to tree surgery by the HCC tree unit on trees to be plaqued in August as well as removal of gums in the southern section. The process of installing plinths will begin next week in preparation for the August dedications. It has been decided that the next group of plaques will be installed slightly differently: instead of being set into the concrete, they will sit 'proud'. The plinths will be poured and finished with the plaques mounted

later. A different 2-part lacquer will be used that is both stronger and more scratch resistant as well as having better anti-graffiti properties. This will avoid damage to the lacquer during the concrete finishing. The lacquer on the first group of plaques suffered damage during installation and does not look as good as it could or should. The plaques will be air blasted and relacquered in early summer to give a brighter and more resistant finish. Project Hahn and Work for the Dole participants continue to do a fantastic job with the Avenue now transformed out of recognition compared to 4 years ago.

A full list of donors to date will appear in the next issue.

Report on Wine Fundraiser

This has been extended: if you still wish to place an order make sure it is to 11 Franklin St West Hobart by July 22nd. Over \$500 has been raised thus far which is great. We will probably run another wine fundraiser in the lead up to Christmas when a few bottles of wine can go a long way as presents in the extended family.

Mouquet Farm – The last action on Pozieres Ridge, September 1916

The following article has been contributed by John Wadsley, our Secretary.

The 52nd Battalion is just one of the 110 units represented on Soldiers Memorial Avenue, with 41 soldiers commemorated. The battalion's baptism of fire during the Battle of the Somme in France provides a poignant example of how a fighting unit could be decimated in just one major action, and in the process leave many families grieving the loss of husbands, sons and brothers.



The 52nd was one of the new battalions formed in Egypt in March 1916 when it became obvious that Australia would have to commit significantly greater numbers of men to the fighting in France, and the decision was made to 'double' the size of the AIF. The 52nd was formed with approximately half the men coming from veterans of the 12th Battalion (recruited from Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia) and half from new recruits being trained in Australia and in Egypt (again predominantly from Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia).

Consequently many of the new battalions were able to draw on the experience of veteran soldiers to help the raw recruits prepare for the battles that were to come. You will notice the connection between the 12th and 52nd in their colour patches.

My great uncle, Lt Lennard Wadsley (tree #343) had arrived in Egypt in January commanding the 13th Reinforcements to the 15th Battalion. He was transferred to the 4th Training Battalion because of his experience in the local militia before the war. However, when Major Denis Lane, a fellow Tasmanian, invited him to join the new 52nd, Len jumped at the chance. He transferred on 25 March 1916, and set about preparing to train his new charges. Other Tasmanian officers transferred from the 12th to the 52nd included Captain Littler, and Lieutenants Massey, Stubbings, Blakney and von Bibra. Littler is well known as being the last man to leave Anzac Cove during the evacuation in December 1915.

The 52nd was one of four battalions (49th, 50th, 51st and 52nd) in the 13th Brigade, 4th Division AIF. The Brigade was commanded by Brigadier General T W Glasgow and the 52nd by Lt Col M F Beavor.

During April and May the 52nd was engaged in more training and some active duty along the Suez Canal as the Turks pushed forward through the Sinai to prepare for an attack on this most strategic waterway. However, from Len's letters home it appears they spent more time swimming in the Canal than fighting.

On 5 June 1916 the 52nd embarked on the *Ivernia* from Alexandria bound for Marseilles in southern France. They arrived six days later and were soon on a train to northern France. They were initially billeted at Fletre and Sailly near the Belgian border. As was the policy, most new brigades were sent to a quiet sector of the Front, termed 'The Nursery', to allow the troops time to acclimatise and gain some experience of trench life before being committed to battle.

In mid July the 52nd was pulled out of the front line and sent south with the 13th Brigade to begin preparations for contributing to the AIF's efforts on the Somme. Nearly all infantry and artillery units of the AIF served some time on the Somme, and when you examine the dates of death for soldiers on the Avenue, it is clear that the battlegrounds of the Somme would become the final resting place for many Tasmanians.

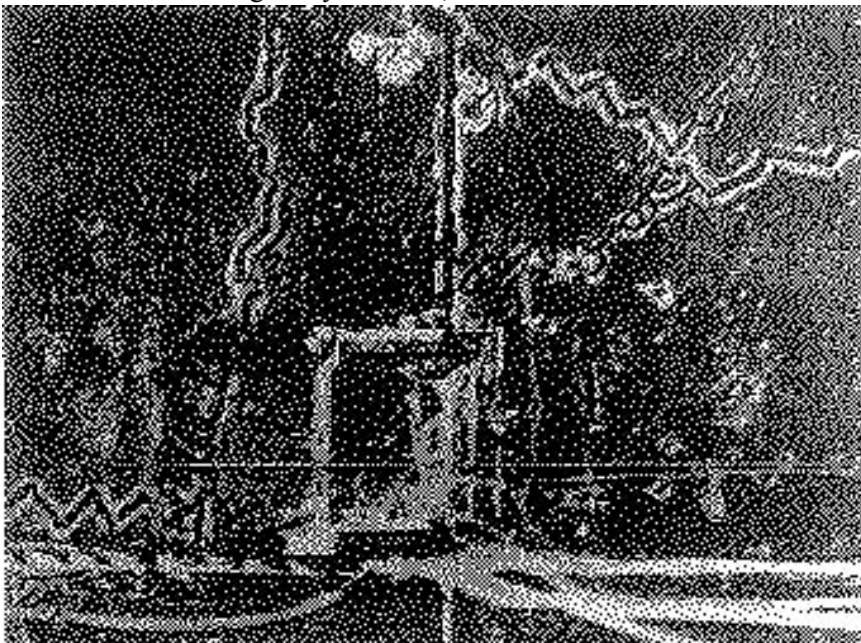
In mid-August the 13th Brigade moved up to the front line near Mouquet Farm. The farm stood in a dominating position on a ridge that extended north-west from Pozieres village. After the initial attacks by the British and French Armies in July, progress along the front had been very slow or non-existent. However, the Pozieres ridge was recognised very early as a key position which could, if taken, open up other key parts of the battlefield.

The 1st Division AIF captured Pozieres on 23 July, and held the position despite repeated German counter attacks and continuous artillery bombardments. When the 2nd Division relieved the 1st on 27 July, the latter had suffered 5,285 casualties. The 2nd Division attempted to extend the gains around Pozieres in a number of fierce engagements, some successful, some very costly failures. When the 2nd was relieved on 6 August, it had suffered 6,848 casualties. Then it was the turn of the 4th Division.

The British High Command decided to try and force the German Army off the Pozieres Ridge, enabling the Allies to get behind the strongpoint of Thiepval further to the north. This job was given to the 4th Division.

Mouquet Farm was a key objective in this strategy. Although the farm had been obliterated by shelling, strong stone cellars reinforced with concrete remained below ground which were a formidable part of the German defences.

The 50th Battalion attacked Mouquet Farm for the first time on 12-13 August, followed by a much larger attack on 14-15 August by the 49th, 50th and 51st Battalions of the 13th Brigade and the 13th Battalion,



with the 52nd held in reserve. Those attacks were very costly and resulted in 915 casualties across the Brigade, all for no gain even though there had been some good initial advances by the 13th Battalion. The 13th Brigade was pulled out of the line to Warloy and Bonneville for rest and reinforcements. Training followed until the end of August when the 4 battalions of the 13th moved back to Albert in preparation for a second tour of duty in the front line. **Left Top: Mouquet Farm before the assault. Trench lines and the outline of buildings can be clearly seen in this aerial photograph.**



Left Bottom: Mouquet Farm after bombardment and combat.

On 2 September orders were issued for the 13th Brigade's attack on Mouquet Farm. The 51st Battalion would attack the farm itself with the 52nd on its right attacking the German trench system known as the Fabeck Graben, and the 49th further again to the right also attacking Fabeck Graben. The 50th was to be held in reserve. Just before the battle, Lt Col Beavor commander of the 52nd was wounded, and replaced by Major Lane.

The attack commenced on Sunday morning, 3 September. For the 52nd Battalion, this was their true baptism of fire and for many Mouquet Farm would become their grave. The War Diary of the 52nd Battalion provides graphic details of that furious charge: "...the Companies commenced their assault about 5.14 am leaving their 'Jumping Off' point very nearly at the same moment. The assault was delivered with much spirit and dash, and in some cases a short, but fierce and bloody hand-to-hand conflict ensued, Bayonets and rifle butts coming into free play. Each Company seized its objective and 'C' Company [Len Wadsley's unit] evidently pushed forward under our own barrage. The Company Commander (Capt Ekin-Smyth) drew them back towards their objective but was unfortunately about this time mortally wounded. The Company again pushed forward and as an organised Unit ceased to exist." The artillery barrage preceding the infantry attack was designed to creep forward across the German trenches, but was complicated by different timing arrangements around the ruins of Mouquet Farm itself, compared to the central area of attack directed at Fabeck Graben. This possibly contributed to the disintegration of C Company.

This was no clean attack. The ground had been churned to mud and the Australians had to move through shell holes, destroyed trenches and dead and dying men to maintain the momentum. It seems that C and D companies of the 52nd were virtually destroyed within 3 hours. Two platoons of B Company had been tasked to attack the farm itself to support 51st Battalion. However, only 31 men reached their objective. A Company under the command of Lt Duncan Maxwell (after the death of Captain Littler) was able to join up with the 49th Battalion and secured their objectives on the right. A Company from the 50th Battalion was sent forward to support the 51st at the farm. Men of C Company of the 51st were sent out to join up with the 52nd in the centre, but were never seen again. Communication across the battlefield was almost impossible and it was some time before Brigadier General Glasgow learnt that most of the objectives of the attack could not be consolidated, or even held.

On Monday 4 September reinforcements from the 1st Canadian Brigade began to move up to support the Australians. By nightfall, there were sufficient Canadians in place to allow the 13th Brigade to move out. Mouquet Farm had not fallen. The 51st had taken the farm, but had been forced to pull back, the 52nd had failed to consolidate their front line, even though Maxwell's company had ensured the 49th could hold onto its objective.

The attack was a failure, and at an extremely heavy cost. The 52nd Battalion lost twelve officers and 438 men killed or wounded in that brutal encounter, over half its strength. We know that at least 95 Tasmanians in the 52nd were killed at Mouquet Farm, probably the highest number of Tasmanians to die over two days in a single battle during the First World War.

The 13th Brigade lost, in total, 41 officers and 1,305 men killed or wounded. The attacks mounted against Mouquet Farm between 8 August and 4 September 1916 cost the 1st, 2nd and 4th Australian Divisions over 11,000 casualties, and not one succeeded in capturing and holding it.

The Canadians were not able to take Mouquet Farm. The British advance bypassed the strongpoint leaving it isolated. It eventually fell on 27 September 1916.

Some of those brave 52nd Battalion Tasmanian men who died at Mouquet Farm are remembered on Soldiers Memorial Avenue. They are:

Sgt Barry Addison, Tree #140 (right: Addison tree party July 1918, Barry's sister is in the centre);

Pte Benjamin Anderson, #138 and his brother

Pte Robert Anderson, #148;
Cpl Stanley Burge, #141; Pte Albert Ford, #144;





Pte Joseph Haney, #142 (left)

Pte John Horne, #472
 Pte Stanley Hubbard, #244 (died of wounds 7 September 1916), Pte Olaf Johanson, #146, L/Cpl Leonard Lucas, #347, **Cpt Harry Massey, #137 (right)**, Pte Cecil O'Brien, #229, Pte Eric Seabrook, #149, Pte James Shea, #150, Sgt John Swift, #145, Cpl Robert Thorpe, #276 (died of wounds 13



September 1916), **Lt Lennard Wadsley, #343 (left)**, Pte Charles Woodleigh, #161, Sgt Charles Woodward #413, **L/Cpl Clement Woolley #473 (below right)**



You will note that most of the tree numbers are close together.

The main part of the Avenue planted by the HCC consisted of 3 rows of trees planted in rough

chronological order of death. The outer row on the riverside between the southern end and the Magazine was planted in 1919 along with some 'fill-in' trees. Above the Magazine in this row the trees were planted by the New Town Council and follow no particular order. Most of the Mouquet Farm dead are commemorated by trees in the #130s and #140s.

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



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Next Issue: AGM details, final arrangements for August 3.