

## Friends of Soldiers Walk Inc: Newsletter

Issue 3 October 2002



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### Armistice Day

The anniversary of the end of the *Great War* is coming up so on November 10<sup>th</sup>, we are planning an act of remembrance for all the men represented on Soldiers Walk. The plan is to place a poppy on every tree on the Walk and then create a field of poppies for those men whose trees are missing. This will serve to highlight both the number of locals who died in that war and the number of trees that are now missing.

We intend to meet in the carpark at the northern end of the TCA (the usual spot) at 10:30 then breaking into groups to place poppies on the trees. We will then proceed down to the beginning of the Walk and create the poppy field.

### Completing the Clean Up

Sunday October 6th saw another working bee focussing on the southern section of the Walk. If you were part of it or have been up there recently, it is obvious that quite a few trees hidden behind wattles and weeds are now visible. Bushcare provided cover for us and John Sawbridge was our supervisor and a great help once more. The barbeque was great and a big thanks to Barbeques Galore for the loan of a fine bit of equipment and Shame's Meats and Treats for the goodies. Thanks again to Rod Hunt for the amber fluid.



### Plaques Discovered

The great feature of the day was the discovery of an unsuspected plaque by Matthew and Tony Harrison. The plaque for Private Jim Shea was still attached to the tree but buried in the leaf litter and general growth around the base of the tree.



Added to this was the recent and unrelated discovery of the plaque for **Pte Charles B Foreman (12th Bn KIA 6/4/1917)**. This was discovered near the actual tree behind the TCA by Jim Tapp, now of Bruny Island, but a long term resident of the Glebe. Jim has been fossicking around on the Domain for years and is an invaluable source for Domain history. For many years, he placed plaques he found among the grass back on trees and generally did his bit to preserve the Walk. A third plaque also came to light, discovered 13 years

ago by Sue Mazengarb when walking on the Domain. Not having any idea of what it was or why it was there, she took it home where it has been a puzzle until the publicity about the discovery of the Shea plaque. Sue called up and a handover was arranged. Coincidentally the soldier commemorated 2nd Lt A C Thurstans was an accountant at Webster's, Sue is also an accountant though at KPMG.



### 2nd Lt Thurstans

During the Great War, newspapers often carried letters received by family and friends by or about relatives at the front. Recent archival research led to the discovery of a letter, printed in *The Mercury* about the death of 2nd Lt Alfred Charles Thurstans, 40th Battalion. He was killed on April 5th, 1918 in Marett Wood near Mericourt on the Ancre.

#### Tasmanian Casualties Personal Notes

*Mrs A C Thurstans, of Mt Start, whose husband was recently killed in France, has received the following letter relative to his death, sent to a friend in London, from Captain and Adjutant Green of the 40th Battalion:*

*"My dear sir,- It is my painful job to inform you that your brother-in-law, Lieut. A C*



*Thurstans, was killed in action this morning. I found your address in his pay-book, which I took from his body, and thought it best to let you know as soon as possible in case you wish to cable his wife. He was killed by a shell during the enemy bombardment, preliminary to attacking. Death was instantaneous. I sent his body out to a cemetery in a small village near the line, and the chaplain afterwards informed me that he had been buried in the proper manner. I cannot give you the name of the village yet, as it is prohibited by censorship regulations, but I can send it to you in a few weeks' time. If all goes well with us here I while have a headstone made and put up as soon as possible in memory of one of the finest men it has ever been my privilege to know. He went into action with us a few days ago, and did very fine work indeed in a most difficult situation. I will be very glad*

*to supply you with further information if you require it."*

The Mercury 18th June 1918

Lt Thurstans was buried in Mericourt L'Abbe Communal Cemetery Extension. His death is also noted in the battalion history *The Fortieth* by Frank Green (Hobart 1922) p 125

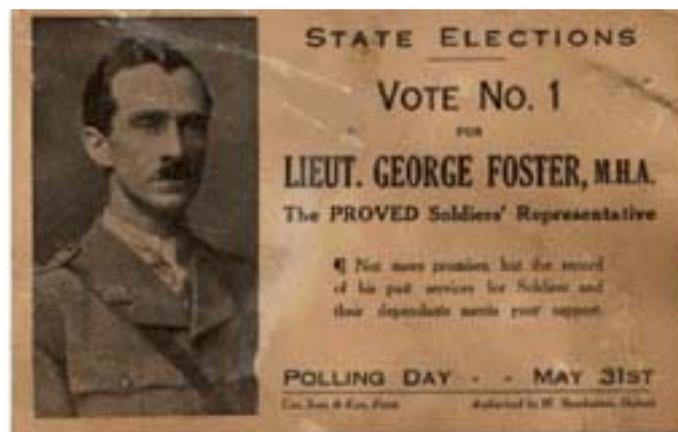
### Domain House

As you have probably all noticed, expressions of interest have been asked for in relation to the Domain House site. Originally part of the Domain grant from Queen Victoria to the people of Hobart, the present Domain House site was excised for 'educational purposes'; first for the building of the original Domain House as a secular high school funded by merchants and later as the first home for the University of Tasmania. The site passed to the Education Department when the university moved to Sandy Bay in the mid 50s and became part of the Technical College, now TAFE. Later still Adult Education (now part of TAFE!) used the site. The push is on for the site to remain in public hands as it was only excised from the Domain as long as it was used for 'educational purposes'.

Needless to say, it would make a good site for a museum/interpretation centre for Soldiers Walk and the Domain generally. There is already much material for an exhibition focusing on the Walk and Hobart of the period, the history of the Domain and the history of Hobart at war. The site includes the Waterworth building, which was used for the manufacture of field gun sights in World War Two. We will be keeping an eye on developments to ensure we get a home in any public development of the complex.

### George Foster

In the last issue, we had a short piece about George Foster MHA, State Secretary of the RSSILA and one of the prime movers in the establishment of Soldiers Walk. Jim Tapp, pictured above, found his memory jogged and digging down into the treasure trove he found this How to Vote card. Originally discovered behind the mantelpiece in his



Glebe house during renovations many years ago, it has Foster's name in pencil on the back but it is not clear if it is a signature. You can note that George is referred to as Lieut rather than Sgt and this may be a militia or brevet rank.

### Another description of the planting.

*The Mercury* Monday June 26, 1918 p7

#### The Avenue of Honour: Preparing for the Planting A Working Bee Afternoon

Probably the largest "working bee" afternoon yet witnessed in Hobart took place on the Domain on Saturday, when 500 to 600 soldiers, civilians, several of the weaker sex, and even a few boys took part in digging holes for the 317 holes to be planted on July 27, in memory of men and officers belonging to the municipality of Hobart who have laid down their lives at Gallipoli, in Egypt and France in the defence of the Empire. This commendable idea is being carried out by the Hobart Council, on behalf of the municipality and odes not include the whole of Denison, as had been erroneously notified

in preliminary advertisements, and it is a good hint to other municipalities to similarly commemorate the honoured dead. Commencing to the right of the pathway up the University Reserve, and sweeping in a curve to near the South African monument, the avenue will then cross the path just over the rise of the hill. It will then take a course northward over the summit of the rising ground overlooking Government House, with two shorter avenues junctioning with the main one at each end. The Council have found the trees, 2 yr old cedars, procured from Ballarat, tree guards, and permanent metal tags for the trees, each bearing the name of the fallen soldier, his unit number and battalion colours, and the numbers will run consecutively, commencing on the city side of the avenue with No 1 representing the first of the Hobart soldiers who fell at Gallipoli, then the second, and so on. The avenue has been planned by Mr L J Lipscombe, superintendent of reserves, and the Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Association, with Mr George Foster, MHA as Hon. Secretary, had undertaken the to facilitate the project by enlisting the aid of returned soldiers, civilians, and the military in digging the holes. The Commandant (Colonel Clark) granted permission for a party of 150 men from Claremont Camp, under Lt T Orr to come on Saturday and assist, their railway fares being paid for the purpose. The Ordnance Department supplied 500 picks and 380 shovels. The scene on the ground was an animated one. The soldiers from Claremont camp arrived between 1 and 2 o'clock and at once commenced operations. Soon several returned soldiers and civilians took up picks and shovels from the heap near the monument, and were given their numbers (of the holes to be dug) by Mr Foster, and those set to work in earnest.



*This photo is of a family group (attended by some Scouts) digging the hole for tree 350 (now #433) for 2/Lt Charles Stephen Fuller No1 Squadron RFC, the son of Mr SH and Mrs E Fuller of Landsdowne Cemetery West Hobart. In the hole are Charles Young (36) and Augustus Crowhurst (64). The photo was discovered recently by Barry and Pat McNeil of Mt Nelson.*

Among the civilians were some representatives of the fallen soldiers, who proceeded to dig holes for the trees which would represent their kinsmen. Employees of the Gas Company dug holes for the trees in memory of those who had been employed by the company, and had made the supreme sacrifice; City Council men did the same thing; also representatives of the Tramway company, waterside workers, and State High School. The boys completed their part in a thoroughly workmanlike manner. Lawyers, merchants, civil servants, and even a federal legislator (Senator Earle) did some digging. Whilst the Mayor (Aldermen Shields), Hon. W. M. Williams, MLC, Hon. J. W. Evans CMG MHA, were among the onlookers, and aiding in the arrangements. Gradually the number of spectators, especially ladies, increased to several hundreds, numerous parties in motor-cars and cabs coming to look on, all contributed to a scene which was not only which was not only cosmopolitan, and unique in character, but lively and inspiring. The soldiers were particularly exuberant. Two hands worked in digging each hole, one using the pick and the other the shovel, and the men stripped to their khaki breeches, chaffed each other from hole to hole, cracked jokes, and even threw lumps of earth at one another. The soldiers worked with a will for a time, each hole having to be cut 6ft. by 6ft., and 2 ft. deep. Some had softer ground than others, and a few had rocky sopts to work, where they could not make much progress without blasting. A few expert civilians made very quick work of it, and these, together with some of the soldiers, having completed their holes by 3 o'clock, having done their digging and shovelling in a little over an hour. Among many of the remaining parties the jocular side of operations came into prominence. The scene having become livened up in this and other ways, the ladies resolved to join in the fun, and one after another took up the shovels, a and a few even the picks, and went on shifting the earth whilst the "boys had a blow," giving rise to a lot of comic remarks, which produced at times roars of laughter. One elderly lady threw her mantle and hat on the ground, rolled up the sleeves of her blouse, took the pick from the hands of one digger, and said, "I'll show you how to do it." She was soon surrounded by a crowd of lookers on, whom she surprised by the vigorous way she went to work with both pick and shovel, and stooping to throw out the big lumps of earth in all directions. So the work went merrily on till about 200 holes had been completed and many more partly dug, operations ceasing for the day by about 5 o'clock, a very good beginning having been made. The work will be resumed probably next Saturday, or the subsequent weekend.

His Excellency the Governor and Miss Newdegate rode over the ground on horseback in an unofficial capacity, and were greatly interested in the operations, and were greeted by several of the soldiers. They interviewed Mr Foster, His Excellency remarking that an exceedingly good start had been made.

There was one hitch only in the afternoon's proceedings, and that was the absence of any organisation in the way of supplying refreshments. Mr Foster and the Committee intend to obtain the assistance of a ladies' committee to supply afternoon tea next time. As soon as the mistake was discovered on Saturday prompt efforts weer made to remedy it, with the result that hot pies were sent from the Piccadilly Café, and oranges and other fruit distributed as far as supplies would permit.

At the planting the Cheif Justice made a speech as the Governror was unable to attend due to an accident that morning.

***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.

An imposing feature of the occasion was the march of 150 veterans from the returned Soldiers' Club rooms in Elizabeth-street to the Domain. They were headed by the squadron of Light Horse under Lieut. E E Jones, who was to have escorted His Excellency. En route they were cheered by the lines of people making their way towards the Domain. Cadet companies, naval squads, and boy scouts arched in from different points, converging on the dais on the brow of the hill overlooking Government House. Long before the appointed opening time there was a crowd verging on 10,000 surrounding this point and inspecting the pits and trees. The dais was draped with Allied flags, and souvenir hunters were besieged with cameras.

The Mayor (Alderman Shield) introducing Sir Herbert Nicholls, who was to officially open the planting, said the planting of the avenue had been undertaken to perpetuate the memory of Hobart's fallen sons, and to serve as a reminder to the future generations of the noble sacrifice made by their heroic forefathers on the other side of the world. He expressed the earnest hope that the relatives of the men who had made the supreme sacrifice would gain comfort in the reflection that Australia appreciated her fallen sons, who had died the death of heroes, nobly doing their duty. (Applause.) He dwelt on the absence of the Governor, who was to have performed the opening ceremony, but who was unable to attend owing to an accident that morning.

On the dais were the Misses Newdegate, Lady Doris Blackwood, Sir Herbert Nicholls, Sir Elliot Lewis, Hon. W B Propsting CMG., Captain Evans CMG., the State Commandant (Colonel W J Clark), Colonel Giblin, PMO., Lieut-Col Butler, and Captain Davies.

The Chief Justice (Sir Herbert Nicholls) sympathetically referred to the accident sustained by His Excellency during the morning. He said: "While I do not propose to

move a formal motion on the subject, I will ask all who wish to request the Mayor to express the sympathy of the citizens with His Excellency on his accident to hold up their hands." Immediately the whole of the large crowd responded. The Chief Justice continued: This speech is thrust upon me quite unexpectedly, and I am at a loss to find words to express my feelings. If one had the vocabulary of a Shakespeare and the voice of an Erskine, one could not say a thousandth part of what would enter one's mind, nor express the emotion that arises in contemplating the reasons for this gathering. And so, as the trees to be planted gradually grow up, perpetuating the memory of the men who were once like strong young trees, they will remind us of those heroic patriots, whose bones are now lying on foreign shores. (Applause.) We have had such a curious history, that many men must acknowledge having lost sight of the fact that Australia was not exempt, and could not be exempt, from the misfortunes and calamities which from time to time have beset all nations throughout history. Now, at last, owing to the development of a thought among the German people, and the blind and insane self-confidence which made them believe that they could dominate the remainder of the world as slaves are dominated, Australia has had to face the fact- as all nations at some time have to face it-that her liberties, national existence, and everything that she treasures in this free country were in danger, and that she had to fight for them. (Applause.) As to what part those brave men who went from Australia have played, whether in Gallipoli, Suez, Mesopotamia, Belgium, or France, or anywhere else, we can say, with a clear conscience, that the manhood of Australia has provide itself well worthy of this great free land, and their deeds have given it promise, the future, of being a country of brave and free men. (Applause.) In thinking of what our men have done, I am reminded that here in Hobart an immense number of our women have been engaged at comforts work, which, though not dangerous, is extremely toilsome and laborious. Our women have stuck to that work - literally kept their noses on the grindstone- from day to day, and unless America beats us, the Australian troops, as the



result, will have been better cared for by their Red Cross than any troops in the field. In losing sight, as we do, of some of the greater things of life, I think we forget the real meaning of the words patriotism and liberty. This can be seen by a contrast of our conception of these words before the war and now. If there is anyone to whom these words are not of living importance, let him find out the fate of the populations that have come under the heel of Germany, whether they were ill-treated like the people of

Serbia, or massacred like the Armenians, or like the people of Russia, downtrodden by Germany when she was supposed to be their ally. All that slavery and horror threatened us, and still threatens us, but I think that we need no longer need fear its coming here, and one of the reasons is that we have discovered amongst Australia's manhood an immense number of volunteers willing and ready to travel enormous distances to fight for her preservation. They have done for Australia and civilisation more than any of the most famous Roman characters did for Rome. We have bred real patriots in hundreds of thousands. I hope that a proportion of the young, athletic men still in Australia will emulate their example. These trees will grow up and remind the people of Tasmania of the many brave fellows who so nobly sacrificed themselves for their country and in remembering their worth. It will be among the most glorious things we can say of them - that not one of them was ever guilty of an offence against a woman. If, in the midst of war, they can live such a life, what can they now do for this young country in the future? Words are futile to treat such subjects as these. (Prolonged applause.)

Lieut-Col Young, President of the Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Imperial League of Australia, mentioned that the idea for an avenue to the memory of fallen soldiers originated with the Corporation of Hobart. He paid a tribute to the assistance of Mr Lipscombe, the curator, and to returned soldiers, recruits at Claremont camp, and the many civilians who had so ably assisted in the work of preparation. On behalf of the association, he deplored the Governor's accident, and extended deep sympathy to the relatives of fallen comrades, for whom the trees were to be a memorial. Referring to the recruiting question, he disparaged the popular reference to shirkers as "cold footers." He said that many men going over the top at the front got an attack of cold feet while awaiting the word to start off. The shirkers at home were not cold footers. They were frost-bitten from the crowns of their heads to the soles of their feet. (Laughter.) He hoped that in the future Domain orators would look upon this fine memorial avenue, and think for a few moments of putting in a word to secure reinforcements for the boys at the front, instead of prostituting their talents to petty political issues. (Applause.) He referred to the fine work done by Sir Wm Bridges in laying the foundation of the fine Australian army which had cut its name deep into the pages of history. (Applause.)

The speeches were followed by the singing of the hymn, "O God Our Help," and the National Anthem, and the work of planting commenced.

### **The Committee**

The Committee formed at the AGM consists of:

Adrian Howard (President) John Trethewey, Darby Quinn (Vice Presidents), Rod Hunt (Secretary and Public Officer), Kirsty Black (Treasurer), Michael Wilkie and Tony Peck (Committee Members). We have been joined by Ian Harris from the RSL

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**Please note that a full list of soldiers commemorated on the walk will be mailed out in the next couple of weeks**