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## Frank MacDonald: Our Patron

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As you are probably aware, our patron Frank MacDonald MM has been unwell and was admitted to hospital late last year. He recovered and spent Christmas Day at home with his niece Phyllis. His state of health means however that he will now reside in a nursing home with access to 24-hour medical care. Before his illness, A Howard (president) and Terry Mundy spent a couple of days with Frank, listening and filming as he talked about his childhood, his war experiences, and his family and working life. An outstanding man, his memory is more acute than many half his age. It is hoped to bring these conversations to a wider audience sometime during 2003. In the meantime, we all wish Frank the best.

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### **A vision for the Walk: For every soldier a tree, for every tree a plaque.**

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The Soldiers Memorial Avenue on the Queen's Domain was originally intended to more than a simple avenue of trees. It was conceived as a mile long park with the memorial trees, each with its individual plaque, interspersed with garden beds, native shrubs and trees and memorials for each of the units represented. It is our aim to see that vision realised.

#### **For Every Soldier, A Tree**

FOSW believe that the Avenue should be re-constituted ensuring that every soldier originally represented has a tree in the Avenue. Where the tree cannot be replanted in the original position, the trees should be planted as close as possible to those original positions creating shortened new rows if needed. In the case of the trees under Cross Roads oval, they should be replanted around the perimeter making use of the ample unused sections of this space. If that is not possible, some other arrangement should be

used to ensure all trees are replaced. The oval itself should be re-named Soldiers Walk Memorial Oval.

### **For Every Tree A Plaque**

Each tree was originally plaqued and should be so again. Plaques should be made of bronze and set on a small angled plinth. Coloured unit patches should be set in the sides. Plaques should include the following detail:

- Full name (not initials)
- Regimental number and unit
- Street address
- Age
- Occupation
- Other detail such as place of birth, place of work, position in family, relationship to other soldiers on the Avenue.

### **Restoration**

The original avenue consisted of cedars and these have obviously not coped well with the environment. Many trees have succumbed to the combined effects of lack of nutrition due to poor soil, intermittent water and fire. Many of the dead trees still in situ seemed to have succumbed only in the last twenty years during which time the HCC and community have been less active in maintaining the Avenue.

Planting cedars would maintain the vision of the original Avenue though the planting of Italian cypresses has already compromised this. Those that still exist can be replaced as needed. The use of cedars marks out the Avenue in every way and ensures continuity; some cypresses need replacing and they could be replaced with cedars. Seedlings have already been propagated from Avenue cedars. **Irrigation** would ensure health of surviving trees is stabilised and that future trees are well watered from planting. This should be underground and drip feed to minimise security and maintenance issues. This would also reduce the impact on grassland plants.

### **Interpretation**

Extensive interpretation is desirable at the beginning, middle (northern end of TCA) and at Cross Roads and the Oval. This should incorporate:

- information on the soldiers,
- the original Avenue plan, and the planting of the Avenue,
- Hobart and the Domain at that time,
- The Avenue movement in Tasmania and
- history of the Avenue (families, loss of top end).

This should include maps of Hobart, Tasmania and Australia indicating the origins of the commemorated soldiers.

### **Sculpture**

As originally envisaged there should be unit memorials along the Avenue. The preferred option is for free standing life size bronze figures engaged in appropriate service activities. Many of these could be based on photographs of soldiers from the relevant units. They could include:

- stretcher bearers (3<sup>rd</sup> Field Ambulance)
- soldier grooming his horse (3<sup>rd</sup> Light Horse)
- groups of infantry based on photographs (for each of the Tasmanian battalions)
- gunners at their weapon (3<sup>rd</sup> AFA Bde)

Consideration could also be given to other memorials for sailors and airmen as well as nurses.

### **Previous Plaques**

Remaining plaques should be returned to the Walk as part of a wall of plaques at the northern end of the TCA with each plaque encased in a hardy transparent material.

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## **DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN**

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The President, A Howard, and Vice President, John Trethewey, have been meeting regularly with Council officers since June last year. This Soldiers Walk Working Group has been discussing a variety of issues related to the restoration and maintenance of the Walk. A draft management plan has been looked over and should be ready for submission to the appropriate Council sub-committees by mid-February and then will go out for public consultation and comment. The early signs are every positive for restoration along the lines of our vision but work remains to be done.

The issues most likely to be contentious relate to the choice of species for replacement, removals of inter-planted gums, clearing of the Avenue area, irrigation (if so, for which trees and for how long) and long-term maintenance and management of the grassy areas along the Avenue. The environment is not the ideal one for cedars and this has prompted some suggestions for the use of a native species. This makes some sense but basically would also spell the end of the Avenue as a distinctive and formal entity and erode its unique characteristics. We will keep you all informed and will arrange for copies of the draft plan to go to all members. When the time comes make your opinions known. In the meantime if you have any comment about the restoration please drop me a line.

In the meantime we have pointed out the need to protect some individual trees that have other trees collapsed into them, trees growing close to the trunks or paths across their immediate surrounds. It is hoped that this will be dealt with soon.

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## **Fire Threat**

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Fire is a major concern. There is an overall fire management strategy for the Domain but this relates to the Domain as a whole and involves hazard reduction burns of stipulated sections on a rotation basis. Three areas were burnt last year including a section along the northern section of the Walk.

The real problem is that there is no fire management in the Walk itself. The cedars do not cope with the radiant heat from grass fires, as a quick examination of the outer rows will show. There is a considerable amount of fuel within the Walk and any outbreak during what looks like a long hot summer could be catastrophic. This problem has been pointed out to Council officers. It is hoped that the area can be slashed or mowed to reduce this fire risk before the height of the fire season. Reducing the risk in the Walk would also help the southern part of the Domain as whole by providing an effective firebreak.

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## **New Records and Photos**

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Recent examination of the Weekly Courier (a weekly news magazine published in Launceston) has revealed lots more photos of the preparation of the holes and planting

day in 1918. Interestingly there are more photos than in the Hobart-based Tasmanian Mail. Many photos include some names of diggers (eg Rev Overend and party), the soldier for whom the tree was to be planted (eg preparing the Monks tree) or the family group undertaking the planting (eg the Wickens family).

We are also in the process of tracking the history of the Walk through the decades and have discovered some letters to the Editor from most decades noting the poor state of the Avenue, opposing the building of the oval and tip and even organising a working bee in the 1930s. One well-known Tasmanian Nigel Abbott addressed the *Mercury's* readers thus in 1961.

#### **Neglect of war memorial**

Neglect of the First World War memorial on the Domain is emphasised by the proposal to establish a tip at the northern end of the memorial.

The memorial consist of four rows of pine trees [sic] bordering path from the Cenotaph to the cross roads. Around the base of each tree is a small chain supporting a metal disc inscribed with the name of a Tasmanian soldier who was killed in action or who died in the war. So long is it since these memorial trees received any care that wattle trees grow entwined with some of them and are taller than they.

Conversion of the northern end of the memorial to a rubbish tip, for however short a time, would be a disfigurement, an act beyond neglect.

Acceptance of the attractively easy solution of the cross roads as the site for a tip disregards the fact that the tip is to be temporary. Why not decide on and establish the permanent site now? The City Engineer has been overseas some time investigating rubbish disposal and should be able o recommend a site and method.

*The letter continues with a detailed outline of the limits and problems with the plan.*  
N D Abbott, *Mercury* 8<sup>th</sup> August 1961 p4.

#### **Neglect of war memorial avenue shameful**

It is now 50 years since the word "Anzac" came into use. The name ANZAC Day means a day on which we remember those who fell in three wars. At the end of the First World War, an avenue of trees was planted form eth swimming pool to the Domain crossroads, each tree to the memory of on who did not return.

As a ratepayer I am ashamed of the neglect of the Avenue. No attempt is being made to save the trees. Today many are as dead as the man they were tp resent in the avenue. Acting on the advice of Mr Norman Evans and working to his instructions my son and I saved our family trees and more can be saved by the same methods.

The late Mt Wilfred Osborne, a man I always admired, gave a lot of time to bring about the planting of the avenue. Today his son is our Lord Mayor and I would like to see the avenue brought back to what it should be.

This year would Arbor Day plantings be in the avenue to replace the trees which have died and others trees worked around to save them and give us an avenue to point to with pride?

Sandy Bay H McG Swift. *Mercury* 15<sup>th</sup> April 1965 p4

*Two Swift's appear in the Avenue; father and son. Thomas, the son, was killed at the landing on Gallipoli and his father John died at Pozieres in September 1916.*

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## Soldiers Tales: The Hall Brothers

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In an earlier issue, we ran a short piece by Darby Quinn about his uncle on the Walk. This issue the story comes from Graham Hughes.

I can recall my mother telling me how she and other members of her family had to walk from their home at 20 Mary Street in North Hobart to the Domain carrying containers of water to put on Eric's and Norman's trees.

Lance Corporal Norman John Alexander Hall (#2033 52<sup>nd</sup> Bn) was killed at the age of 23 1<sup>1/4</sup> miles north East o Pozieres in 13 August 1916. He had earlier served on Gallipoli for



6 months with the 12<sup>th</sup> Bn\*. His name is listed on the Australian memorial at Villers-Bretonneux. His brother, Sergeant Eric Arthur Hall (#1218 52<sup>nd</sup> Bn) was killed at Broodseinde Ridge aged 22years6months on 18 October 1917 and was buried at Zonnebeke on the way yo a dressing station. His name is listed at Sanctuary Wood Cemetery Zillebeke. These men were my mother's half-brothers.

I have thought often of my grandmother and how she must have been so distraught on receiving the news of the death of Norman and then a year later a message would have arrived telling her of the death of Eric. I'm sure it was enough to have broken her heart. These two young men were her last link to her

husband, their father, John "Joker" Hall who was drowned tragically on the Derwent Rover while fishing with friends on the morning of March 14 1897 when the boys were aged four and two (Eric was the elder). She had raised the two lads, no doubt with the help of friends, but essentially on her own until she met my grandfather, Alfred Bruce Crooks. They were married in June 1901.

The sitting room in my grandmother's house was a virtual shrine to these two young men, even at the time of my earliest memory some 20 years after the boy's death until she died in 1965 there were photographs of Eric and Norman, their framed service medals, a photograph of the troopship 'Themistocles' that Eric sailed to the other side of the world in (Norman sailed later in the 'Hoororata'), the Hobart Honour Roll and many other photographs of the two with their mates and numerous books and magazines including volumes of the history of the Great War.

There was also a framed citation from Eric's CSM detailing his death, part of which reads, "He had just come back from a wiring party from in front of the firing line and as nearly to his trench when a shell came in the midst of them - killing two men and



wounding Eric. This happened just before daylight on the 18<sup>th</sup> inst. He died later on during the afternoon at the dressing station was buried by our padre.....He was looked upon as the best Sergeant we had in eth company."

In the lounge room was the framed satin tapestry, which had the words "Souvenir of Egypt 1915 - To Mother with love Norman." After my grandmother's death, numerous cards, letters and photographs, including diaries and other memorabilia of Eric's and Norman's were found in eth attic of 20 Mary Street, North Hobart.

On my contemplation of these items and of the memories I have of my grandmother's house, I have a strong appreciation of the importance of Soldiers Walk and why the members of the my family would have worked so hard to help establish this living memorial and to devote so much time and effort to its upkeep even to the extent of carrying water from North Hobart to keep the memory alive.

\* [The 12<sup>th</sup> Bn was split in Egypt in early 1916 to form the 52<sup>nd</sup> Bn, many Tasmanians from the 15<sup>th</sup> Bn went to the 47<sup>th</sup> Bn at the same time as new divisions were formed.]



While scanning the Hall brothers photos with Graham, we looked through scans from the Weekly Courier of the preparation of Walk and planting days. What we found

among these, labelled as 'a group of workers', was a photo of Emma Crook (right front) and her other son, William Crook (left front). The two figures in the centre front are yet to be identified but are believed to be relatives. The group in the background appear to be taking refreshments to the digging parties. The photo appeared in the Weekly Courier July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1918.

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Got a photo or a story, please send them to A Howard at the address given above. Check out the Australian War Memorial site: it now includes red Cross Wounded and Missing Persons files from the Great War. These often include information about the circumstances of a death from eyewitnesses. Note that this can sometimes make disturbing reading. Go to <http://www.awm.gov.au/database/1drl428.asp>