Friends of Soldiers Walk Inc: Newsletter

Issue 6 June 2003

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Public Meeting Monday June 23rd

A public meeting will be held on Monday June 23rd 7:30pm at the Philip Smith Centre on the Domain (Edward St). As well as providing a more detailed update on issues (such as the management plan) than can be given in this newsletter, there will be a presentation about the soldiers of the walk from the database and an accompanying slide show. Refreshments will be provided.

Bicentenary Grants

Two submissions were put in under the Hobart City Council's Bicentenary Grants process; one for a web site and the other for a map pamphlet of the Walk and the Domain. The Council has granted \$8500 for the two projects and will carry the printing cost. The funds will allow for further research to be undertaken on the history of the Walk as well as a professional designer, a programmer and all the liaison work involved. Both projects should be well and truly finished by November.

This is great news: this will mean maps for every member, at Council offices, at sites around the Domain and through tourist information centres. The website will bring to everybody with Internet access, the full store of photographs of the history of the avenue, the database on-line and a wealth of other material. The site will be designed to be expandable so that we can link photos of soldiers and trees to each soldiers file as these become available. We hope to have a public handover to launch the projects with the Council.

ANZAC Day Events

On Thursday April 24th at 11 am the Soldiers Walk database was released and a copy handed over to the Department of Veterans Affairs. We received good coverage in the Mercury and on WIN-TV and some ABC radio coverage. All this was very positive. Copies of the database have been sold to members and other interested folk at \$10 per copy. If you wish to order, just drop a line and enclose a cheque.

The ANZAC Day exhibition got a good crowd with considerable interest in John Trethewey's Great War memorabilia and the photograph display on the preparation and planting of Soldiers Walk.

Draft Management Plan

John and Adrian spent a day with the Hobart City Council officers on the Working Group nutting out the final format for the draft management plan. This will be drafted over the next few weeks and will hopefully go to Council in August. Things are looking very positive for more clearance work along the Avenue.

Burning Off

Under the Council fire management plan for the Domain, a number of burns were planned for this autumn. Due to the poor weather, this did not take place. Hopefully after the acceptance of the

management plan, regular slashing in and around the Walk will reduce the fire hazard inside the Avenue and along its edges.

Early Photo of the Avenue

This is one of the many photos over the life of the Avenue that will soon be available through the website. It is taken from near the TCA looking south along the Avenue. Note of course that you can seen the full expanse of the Avenue and that there are no inter-planted trees: the Avenue was meant to stand out. It is also interesting to note that the natural landscape is of a white gum grassland and quite open on this section of the Domain. A small white fence surrounds each tree with those closest to the viewer being very ornate; it is known if that was designed that way or if some families placed their own fences. Jim Tapp relates that these fences remained until the 1960s when they were removed by the Council.



Another Plaque comes to light

The plaque for Sgt Hedley Venus has come out of hiding. Another plaque found on the Domain in years past is coming home again. Tom Schlegelmilch found the plaque many years ago and recently contacted us to hand over the plaque for safekeeping.

Sgt Hedley George Venus enlisted in the 12th Bn on August 16th 1915 being killed 8 months later on June 25th 1916. A Methodist (attending Wesley Hall) and cabinetmaker of Argyle St Hobart, he had been born and educated in Launceston. He was married to Eleanor Edith Venus, who after the war lived with E Hawson at Ramine in Argyle St. He was 29 when he died and was buried in Rue-Petillon Cemetery France. The Story of the Twelfth relates in a section dealing with German minenwerfers (trench mortars) and life in the front line in 1916:

"The 12 lb bomb, although a much smaller missile, was responsible for more casualties – although even these did not amount to a great number, the most important being a very capable NCO, namely Sergeant Venus, who was killed whilst taking cover behind a traverse, on June 22nd."



Roadworks Revisited 1987

Jean Panton found this excerpt from the Mercury while sorting her collection recently. It raises a few questions; more next issue on this episode.

Memorial trees in Domain to be felled

Boer War and World War One memorial trees will be felled by the Department of Main Roads to make way for the Tasman Highway extensions at the Queen's Domain, in Hobart.

The 17 cypress trees line Soldiers Walk and each once had a plaque commemorating soldiers killed in the two wars.

The State vice-president of the RSL, Mr Jack McMurray, said he was unaware of the planned felling of the trees.

He said he had attended a meeting in mid 1986 where he saw plans of the road extensions but no mention was made by the Hobart City Council or the Department of Main Roads of removing trees.

He said he would like to know the full story and would be making inquiries.

The Hobart City Council removed all the commemorative plaques several years ago as some trees were diseased and several plaques had been vandalised or stolen.

The removed plagues were placed in a memorial at the entrance to Soldiers Walk.

Several new plaques have been placed on trees, perhaps by relatives of those commemorated soldiers, but these trees will not be felled.

The trees to go are to old to be replanted and the work is expected to be completed at the end of this month.

A spokesman of the Minster for Main Roads, Mr Ian Braid, confirmed yesterday that the trees would be destroyed but said the plaques would be retained and placed on new trees once the road works were completed.

The spokesman said the Government had consulted Mr McMurray, the Domain Defence league and the Glebe Progress Association.

Mercury January 21st 1987

Signage: 1965

Another clue to the slow disappearance of the Walk from public consciousness is provided by this letter to the editor from 1965. Given we have just got a grant to create a map and list of names to be generally available, the discovery of this letter is indeed an interesting coincidence. Note the time lapse.

Memorial Avenue

The RSL and the Hobart City Council should combine to mark the beginning of the Soldier's Memorial Avenue on the Domain with a layout chart and a complete list of the names of the deceased soldiers. It is impossible to even find the trees belonging to one's family.

The public cannot be blamed for thinking that ANZAC Day is beginning to be looked in as just an excuse for a few beers when the remembrance trees are given so little thought.

Hobart Ex RAAF

Mercury April 20th 1965 p4

Family Photo

This photo comes from Reg Escott who is pictured here as a toddler with his father Les (on the left) and his grandfather standing near the tree planted for Gnr Reg Escott at the northern end of the Avenue (#500). It is believed that this tree may still survive amongst the remnants of the Avenue at the Cross Roads. More about the two Reg's in a later issue.



A big thanks to Duncan Kerr's office for photocopying. PDF conversion by Mik O'Leary

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