

**LAUNCH A NEW SOLDIERS MEMORIAL AVENUE BROCHURE BY  
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AM  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA  
QUEENS DOMAIN, WEDNESDAY 22 APRIL 2015**

Today is a great day for the Soldiers' Memorial Avenue. As most of you would know, the idea for an Avenue to commemorate the men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Imperial Force was part of a nationwide movement that began in Ballarat in 1916. In Hobart the proposed planting in 1917 was delayed until better weather in the winter of 1918, when it was reported in the Hobart 'Mercury' that some 400 trees, with associated plaques bearing the names of fallen soldiers, would be planted.<sup>1</sup>

The original plantings were Himalayan, Atlas and Blue Atlas Cedars. Trees were planted at the request of residents of either Hobart or New Town who had lost a family member on service. It is a reflection of the make-up of the forces that served overseas at the time that the average age at death was just over 26 years, with a range from 17 to 47. Most were single men.<sup>2</sup>

It is a great shame that there was a period when the Avenue was not looked after in the way that it deserved. Indeed, during a period in the 1980s many individual trees and plaques were removed, an action that broke the links between the individual soldier and the tree that commemorated his death.

We are, as a community, fortunate for the efforts of the Friends of the Soldiers' Memorial Avenue. In 2001, only 330 of the original 520 trees survived, and the remaining 10 plaques were removed to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery for safekeeping.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of concerns raised by descendants and interested community members, the Friends of Soldiers Walk was incorporated, with Adrian Howard OAM, current Vice-President, as a Founder. Significant research and physical

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<sup>1</sup> Mercury Monday 17 June 1918, p3

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.soldierswalk.org.au/soldier\\_facts.html](http://www.soldierswalk.org.au/soldier_facts.html) accessed 15 Apr 15

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.soldierswalk.org.au/walk\\_history.html](http://www.soldierswalk.org.au/walk_history.html) accessed 15 Apr 15

work by the Friends has resulted in the amazing and moving Avenue that we now have dominating the Queen's Domain.

The plan to link the Cenotaph with the Memorial Avenue by a new walkway over the Tasman Highway will, I hope, ensure that it is not again neglected and will improve access to the Avenue.

This new brochure, the third edition but significantly rewritten, is the work of researcher Adrian Howard OAM, founder of the Friends of the Soldiers Memorial Avenue, with graphic design by Marcus Saunders. Its map incorporates all of the recent works on the Avenue, including new paths constructed around the ovals at the northern end. The brochure has been funded by grants from the RSL Tasmanian Branch and the State Government's Centenary of Anzac program, as well as generous support from the major corporate sponsor the Tassal Group and donations from soldiers' families, friends and supporters.<sup>4</sup>

The brochure provides a history of the Avenue, details of plantings and the Units with which soldiers served as well as a very important guide to the Avenue that allows interested people to find the tree and plaque of the soldiers commemorated along the walk.

Since I have been living at No 7 Lower Domain Road, I have come to appreciate walking along the Soldiers' Memorial Avenue and the work that has been done to restore it. Weeds have been removed; bush encroaching on and sometimes swallowing the avenue cleared and trees replanted. It achieves a good balance between exotic tree planting to commemorate each soldier and maintenance of the grassy white gum woodlands of the Domain. Together with my grandchildren we found the tree (a new tree) and plaque (number 399) for my husband Dick's Great Uncle, Archie Youl Flexmore, a farmer of Richmond Park, who (we learnt) died from his wounds at Flanders in Belgium at the age of 23. The plaque states his parents lived at the Elms, Elizabeth Street, Hobart, no doubt supplying the Hobart connection that allowed his inclusion in the memorial. My grandchildren were fascinated to read on the plaque that Archie Flexmore was a direct descendant of convicts of the First Fleet and Second Fleets. I am sure many families will do as we have, and locate the tree

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<sup>4</sup> Email John Wadsley/David Hughes 2 Apr 15

and plaque of a family member. With the help of this brochure I can now tell my grandchildren that the shape of the badge on the plaque means that he was in the 1st Division, and the colours (red and blue) indicate that his unit was an artillery unit. The plaque also states he was in the 12<sup>th</sup> Brigade (Bde) of the Australian Field Artillery (AFA) and in the 120<sup>th</sup> Howitzer Battery (Bty).

In my view the Soldiers Memorial Avenue is a fitting way to remember those who lost their lives at war. How we remember them can be controversial – for me the Soldiers Memorial Avenue gets it right. Walking along the Avenue, finding the tree and plaque of a relative, reading the plaques of the soldiers who lost their lives is a wonderful way to remember them and understand the tragedy of war.

My heartfelt thanks and congratulations go to all who have been involved in this most important community service. On behalf of the Friends of the Soldiers' Memorial Avenue, it is now my honour and privilege to launch the new information brochure.

Thank you