

# AVENUES OF HONOUR- BRISBANE CITY COUNCIL PROGRESS

## LYNDAL PLANT and NERIDAH PARKE

### INTRODUCTION

In July 2007 Brisbane City Council published an Avenues of Honour Research Report about twenty four known memorial and commemorative tree planting sites within the Brisbane City Council area, in support of the national project. Among those planting sites are some of the earliest plantings in Australia undertaken in 1917 for local soldiers who lost their lives in World War One. Other plantings honour World War 2 and Vietnam casualties. Yet others are commemorative and often misguided attempts to establish Lone Pines (*Pinus halepensis*) in subtropical Brisbane. All have stories to tell.

The purpose of this paper is to describe Brisbane City Council's journey so far in researching, recording, promoting, protecting and restoring memorial tree plantings in support of the national project. Some of the stories are revealed, as well as the lessons learned and proposed next steps.

### RESEARCH

From November 2005 documented information and historical records were sifted by a history postgraduate, Robert Hogg, working part-time on contract to Council. Records were also supplied by the state government Heritage Unit and Council's own Heritage Unit, Returned Services League (RSL), local history groups and individual members of the public. Information from the Australian war memorial and the Australian national Archives websites were also utilized. On occasions we also advertised for information about specific sites in local newspapers to seek more local knowledge.

As reported by Dargavel and Cockerell in 2004, most memorial plantings were organized by local committees, were not centrally organized or recorded and therefore local knowledge was critical to fill the many gaps in or losses of recorded information.

Once the word was out, numerous anecdotal stories began pouring in. The value of our contracted, qualified historian and the support of our own Heritage Unit staff ensured that these stories were carefully screened and verification sought in documented records. Initial drafts were also rechecked with each contributor.

Many of the original avenues or individual memorial tree plantings still remain today. The stories of three of those sites are outlined below.

#### **Honour Avenue, Yeronga Memorial Park:**

Originally established between September 1917 and August 1919, this avenue included 96 trees for each of the men and women of that local area who lost their lives. In fact, of the 599 residents of Stephens Shire who enlisted, 96 lost their lives. Believed to be the second oldest memorial planting in Australia, the plantings took place at three separate ceremonies and included Weeping Figs and Flame trees. Over the years many of the original fig trees have been replaced and so to the plaques which were originally a metal shield style. Each year just before Anzac Day, the neighbouring Yeronga State Primary School students stand in class groups, with local war veterans, at each of the trees while names of the commemorated fallen servicemen are read out on the school loudspeaker.

### **Bulimba Memorial Park:**

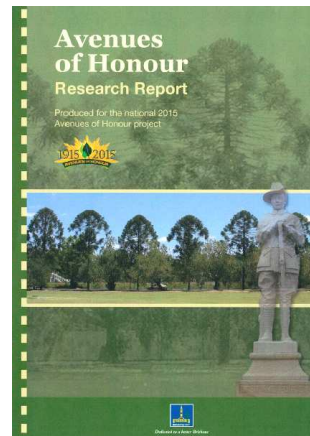
Nine small-fruited Figs (*Ficus microcarpa var microcarpa*) along the Oxford Street boundary of this park, are some of the original plantings which took place between 1919 and 1923. The stories and the original plaques from these magnificent trees were carefully preserved mainly due to the efforts of the late Ernie Adsett. As President of the Colmslie RSL, Ernie not only oversaw the safekeeping replicas of the plaques associated with these plantings, but also made a special effort in the week of every Anzac Day to visit local schools and remind children of the importance of this Day. Unfortunately Ernie passed away last year, but his legacy has been championed by members of the Colmslie RSL Sub Branch.

### **Sergeant William Henry Cooling:**

A striking perimeter planting of alternating Bunya Pines (*Araucaria bidwillii*) and Cottonwoods (*Hibiscus tiliaceus*) in Graceville Memorial Park honours 52 local lives lost in World War 1. One of the bunya pines is dedicated to Sergeant William Henry Cooling who died at Gallipoli on 22 October 1915. Sgt. Cooling was a local school teacher and devoted parishioner who joined the AIF, A Company 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion on 7 May 1915. He is buried in Main 16<sup>th</sup> Hospital Cemetery at Gallipoli and is honoured by not just one but two memorial plantings. In addition to the Bunya Pine in the park, a small brass plaque fixed to a Cabbage Palm (*Livistonia australis*) in the grounds of the Sherwood Uniting Church, bears his name.

While much effort has gone into gathering information for the Report, it is simply a record of information available at a snapshot in time. There are probably other memorial plantings in the city or more information about existing sites that will become available in the future, especially now that the Report has been distributed to every library and local Councillor's office in Brisbane.

As an ex-serviceman, our Lord Mayor has taken particular interest in the project and personally signed letters that accompanied the distribution of the published report to contributors. The Report will also be available shortly on Council's website.



Many of the sites contained in the Report are listed on the Queensland Heritage Register and or Council's City Plan Heritage Register. This indicates that the significance of sites have been officially recognised and are protected by those legislations. Any proposed works, upgrades or maintenance of these sites requires written approval from either the Environment Protection Agency or Brisbane City Council. As David Lawry knows from recent experience, although not legislative, the Avenues of Honour status of trees in Yeronga Memorial Park has also helped to raise alarms from the community about future development plans for that site.

Steps are underway to add those sites that are not already listed to these Registers. More importantly, as part of the identification and assessment of all significant trees on public land in Brisbane, the memorial plantings have been assessed by a qualified arborist and scheduled for regular maintenance visits. Already, many have been mulched to help them survive the drought. Where possible, every effort will be made to involve the local community in the care and protection of the sites.

## PROMOTION

Opportunities have been taken to highlight the national Avenues of Honour Project and Council's contribution, at milestones throughout the research journey.



Brisbane City Council Lord Mayor, Campbell Newman and RSL State President Doug Formby, accepting their Gallipoli Rosemary plants on Remembrance Day 2006 in Anzac Square.

Brisbane City Council partnered with RSL State Headquarters to help promote the national launch of Gallipoli Rosemary sales on Remembrance Day 2006. A special addition to the regular formal ceremony at the Eternal Flame in Anzac Square was arranged. This segment involved presentations of Gallipoli Rosemary plants to Doug Formby, Queensland State President of RSL President and Lord Mayor Campbell Newman, and attendance of Anna Bligh MLA as the Premier's representative. A historical group dressed in WW1 military uniforms presented the rosemary to the dignitaries. Other plants were planted in gardens in the Square by veterans and their families. Considerable media attention was drawn to both the national project and the role of Gallipoli Rosemary sales, as well as the partnership between Council and the RSL. Council also distributed free packs of Gallipoli Rosemary to each RSL Sub-Branch in the Council area.

## RENEWAL

Beyond the progress so far in recording and promoting local memorial plantings and the national project, two renewal projects have commenced to replace memorial trees lost at significant sites. The two sites chosen for renewal in 07-08 are Graceville Memorial Park and Tennyson Memorial Avenue. In the former, new Cottonwood trees have been planted to restore the integrity of that unique alternate planting pattern. Original tree material was used to propagate the new cottonwoods to maintain the historical connection.

With Tennyson memorial Avenue, none of the memorial trees planted in three stages, one soon after World War 1, another in 1949 and another in 1993, remain on site today. Replanting of this site was identified as a high priority due to the extensive loss of original trees and their honour to local lives lost in both the "Empire Wars". A replacement planting and rededication is planned for the 9<sup>th</sup> November this year, with strong support from locals, Council and the RSL.

A new generic "Avenues of Honour" sign is being developed for use at as many of the existing memorial sites as possible, starting with the Tennyson site later this year.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Other challenges and proposals which we are currently considering for ongoing support of the national project are:-

- A process for screening new information about Brisbane Avenues of Honour through a combination of Council's Heritage Unit, local Councillor's Offices and local history groups.
- An associated process for updating information via Council's and TreeNet websites rather than new publications.
- Criteria for choosing other renewal sites, and
- Determining an appropriate target for new plantings to be completed by 2015, to honour all those service men and women who enlisted in Brisbane and then lost their lives in the World War 1 campaign.

## **REFERENCES:**

**Cockerell, Sarah.** 2004. 2004 TreeNet Avenues of Honour Survey, Proceedings of the 5<sup>th</sup> National Street Tree Symposium 11-28.

**Dargavel, John.** 2004. Memorial Avenues: A historical perspective. Proceedings of the 5<sup>th</sup> National Street Tree Symposium 3-10.

**Brisbane City Council.** 2007. Avenues of Honour – Research Report.