

Friends of Soldiers Memorial Avenue Inc. Newsletter Issue 36: April 2008



Highlights

April Dedications
Charles and Victor Gray
Crossroads Layout and August List

Dates to remember

Dedication Ceremony, 21st April 2008, 1.30pm



President's Report



We were honoured to have our patron HE Governor William Cox AC RFD ED officiate at the February dedications, his last official act as our patron before his retirement from the post of Governor. Once again we were blessed with beautiful weather and a good turnout of official guests, service organisation representatives, descendant families and school children from Triabunna and New Town schools. Thanks to all those who attended and made the day a special one.

We are now preparing for the April dedications and the Anzac Day displays at the Gunpowder Magazine, which have proved so popular in recent years. Further details in this newsletter.

Progress on the Crossroads Oval redevelopment has moved ahead in leaps and bounds with the commencement of the Green Corps team in early February. If you haven't been up to the Crossroads in the last few weeks, then I suggest you do. The copse of she-oaks has been cleared, the new path has been laid out around the northern side of the oval and much of the new fencing is in place. The whole effect has been to open up the oval and once the new Avenue trees are planted, they will be very prominent.

Work is progressing for the major August dedications ceremony and official opening of the first stage of the Crossroads extension. I look forward to providing more details in the near future on the activities planned around the dedications. John Wadsley

Working Bees and Events

We will be holding the following events during April and May. It would be great to see more people come along and give a hand. If you would like to help give us a call.

Anzac Day and Sunday 27th April Public Displays, Gunpowder Magazine from noon

Working Bee Sunday 18th May meet at northern TCA carpark.

April Dedications

For April, the dedications will focus on the Crossroads. This area has now been cleared in full revealing the 6 remaining cedars and 3 cypresses. The first stage of the restoration will consist of laying a new path along the northern side of the group.

FOSMA 36

The dedication will be combined with the official launch of the Green Corps project. The GC launch will take place at 1pm with the dedications at 1:40pm. Family dedications will follow the main group dedication. Note that **entries in bold** are plaques already dedicated but yet to be installed. Holders of these plaques will need to pass them to Adrian Howard (ph 6234 4396) by April 11th so installation can be arranged.

485	Lt Timothy Mahoney 40th Bn	Killed in Action 30/8/1918
487	Pte Frederick Augustus Self 12th Bn	Killed in Action, Lihons France 11/8/1918
489	Private Hubert Garfield Cato 12th Bn	Killed in action, Jeancourt 18/9/1918
491	Lt Percy Binns 2nd Bn	Killed in Action 13/8/1918
493	Pte Henry George Sorarn 12th Bn	Killed in Action Merris 25/7/1918
496	Spr William Wrathall 2nd Tunnelling Coy	Died of Accidental Injuries 6/8/1918
501	Captain Joseph Henry Gard 11th Inf Bde HQ	Died of Wounds 31/7/1918
502	L/Cpl James Dyson Lacy 8th Light Horse	Died of malaria 6/8/1918
505	Private Sydney Bazel Stevenson 12th Bn	Killed in action Meteren 24/04/1918
506	Pte Oswald Hobson MM 26th Bn	Killed in Action Villiers-Bretonneux 8/8/1918
507	Lt (John) Jack Valentine Cook MC 11th Bn, Queens Royal West Surrey Regt	Killed in Action Cortrai 1/10/1918
508	Dvr Harry Augustus Petterd 7th Bde AFA (27th Bty) Died of Wounds 22/10/1918	
509	Gnr Bernard Field Seidel 14th Bde AFA (114th Howitzer Bty)	Died of Sickness Lincourt France 26/11/1918
510	Sgt Frank Rupert Bennett 40th Bn	Died of Disease 04/11/1918
512	Sgt Roy C(Kenneth) Lucas 12th Bn	Died of illness, Hobart 18/1/1919
520	Sgt Frederick Grant Tuck 40th Bn	Killed in Action, Armentieres 31/1/1917

“Victor & Charlie Gray – from Fern Tree to the Western Front”

by Danielle Gray

Tree #412 on the Soldiers Memorial Avenue is dedicated to Pte Victor John Gray, 12th Battalion. Tree #416, immediately adjacent in the same row, was dedicated to his younger brother Pte Charles William Thomas Gray, also of the 12th Battalion. Charles’ tree was lost with the creation of the Crossroads tip, later oval, in 1961.

The Gray boys were the sons of John and Louisa Gray of Huon Road, Fern Tree. Victor, born on January 2nd 1893 was the eldest of the 15 Gray children with Charles (or Charlie as he preferred to be called) born 3 years later on 8th January 1896. Sister Gladys (born 1894) separated the two boys. As alike as chalk and cheese both in looks and temperament, Victor was a thoughtful, good-natured fellow while younger brother Charlie was the fun loving larrikin of the two. The boys had a brief education at the Fern Tree State School at Neika and worked on the family farm on Huon Road where a dairy, pigs and berries (mostly strawberries) were among the produce.

Charlie attempted to enlist in late 1915, then aged 19. However father John refused to give permission for his second oldest son to enlist. Later in 1915, Victor travelled to New Zealand for work with a friend Albert (Jack) Williams, boarding together in the Wellington suburb of Ngahauranga. The boys worked for 6 months



Gray family c1907

at the Freezing Works (slaughter house) in Wellington but also managed to fit in travel around both the North and South Islands. Knowing his brothers restlessness, Victor also wrote to Charlie while in New Zealand, offering to find him work.

However, in a letter to his parents dated 12th May 1916, Victor wrote,

It is no use beaten about the bush any longer. Jack and I have enlisted. Jack went in last Monday and I went in Thursday and we are going in the seventeenth, we will be called up at the end of this month to go to camp. It was the best thing for us to do as they are having conscription here & I would sooner volunteered than be made go. Victor had joined the Reserves and was drawn for active service in the 9th Ballot* with the New Zealand Expeditionary Forces. However, preferring to serve in the AIF, Victor announced his intention to return to Tasmania and signed a statutory declaration that he would report himself upon arrival to the military authorities in Tasmania for the purpose of offering himself for active service. Victor left New Zealand for Tasmania on 6th June 1916 and enlisted with the AIF on July 5th 1916 at Claremont, followed by brother Charlie (who had recently turned 21) on 17th July 1916. Their friend Jack Williams also enlisted with Victor; he was later to marry sister Gladys. Younger brother George (born 1899) was also keen to join his brothers but father John refused to give his consent for the 17 year old and George was left behind in Fern Tree.

The Gray brothers sailed together on the *Palermo* on 30th September 1916. Their letters to home note that



the day they left home was grey and raining heavily. Their mother Louisa, had recently (17th September) given birth to another son, Athol Arthur and the boys managed to see their baby brother just once before their departure. In a postcard from Salisbury Plains, England to his baby brother, Victor wrote,

*My Dear little Baby Brother Just a card to show you I have not forgotten you although I only saw you once. I wish you all the luck that can be had. I am your loving brother Victor
xxxx*

Gregarious and fun loving, the boys also quickly made friends, with Victor writing to his parents from Tidworth Camp Salisbury Plains, England on 23rd November 1916,

We had a good time, there was Charlie Woolford, Dick Newman, Charlie and myself, we are all together & we go out together. Once in England at Tidworth and Larkhill Camps, Victor had no trouble with various drills and marches and due to good health and fitness, was sent to the Western Front on 17th December 1916 arriving on the Western Front on 25th December 1916. Charlie however, was once again left behind. The reason for this appears to have been his teeth. In an undated postcard (but probably around mid March

Vic and mates in studio shot c1916

1917) to sister Gladys, Charlie remarks,

I hope to be in France by this time next week, the lot going this week is nearly all the 22 reinforcements 12 Bat, we went down to the Doctor to be examined he wanted to turn me down for my teeth. I have had 8 out an there two or three to come out he wouldn't pull them when I had the others out. I want to get away with this lot as my mates is going.

* New Zealand had adopted conscription and filled its reinforcement quotas through a mix of volunteers, call up of reserves and then compulsory service.

In the meantime, Victor sent anxious letters to his brother: he possibly thought that it would be better for the brothers to be together so he would be able to look after his younger brother. Charlie however seemed mostly disgruntled with watching his mates get shipped off to France while he sported a sore mouth from teeth being extracted. On a brighter note, Charlie commented that the camp had 'good bands' and he also enjoyed leave in London with good friend Charles Woolford (Charles Woolford 12th Bn was a farmer from Richmond and the only one of the quartet to survive the war).



Victor (left)

The Gray family, whilst very large was very loving and close-knit, and the two boys' absence was felt very much. In particular their sister Gladys was planning her wedding to fiancé Jack Williams and was particularly down spirited that her brothers would not be able to attend her wedding on 11th April 1917. Victor wrote to Gladys on 16th December 1916: *Dear Glad we leave for France tomorrow (Dec 17th) so I thought I would send this and let you know we are all well so cheer up Dear.* The 1916-1917 winter in France was the coldest on record in living memory. Victor's letters home from 'Somewhere in France' speak of the extreme cold but he does not talk of the unfolding horror around him. Engaged in some of the toughest battles in the Western Front, the 12th Battalion was made up of mostly Tasmanians and South Australians. Many units contained cousins, brothers and neighbours as well as good mates.

With at least 8 fewer teeth, Charlie was finally sent to the Western Front and the Gray brothers were reunited in France on 29th March 1917. However the grand adventure that Charlie imagined was in reality frozen trenches, sub zero temperatures and mates dying horrific

and violent deaths in front of their comrades. No letters exist from Charlie after his arrival in France. Possibly he found himself unable to comprehend the situation he landed in. It is likely that he was more preoccupied with simply staying alive.

Victor and Charlie's reunion was short and lasted around a week. On Easter Sunday morning (8th April 1917) Victor was shot in the head while fighting. His injuries are listed as a fractured skull and bullet wounds. He lingered for 2 days in the 3rd Australian Casualty Clearing Station before dying on Tuesday 10th April 1917, a day of heavy snow and very cold. The prolific letter writer and loving son and brother left no message for his family. Brother Charlie and friend Charles Woolford were with Victor fighting in the trenches when he was wounded. It is unknown if they



were with him when he died. Victor is buried in Bapaume Australian cemetery, France. *(see above)*

Meanwhile in Fern Tree, sister Gladys married Jack Williams on 11th April 1917, one day after her beloved brother died on the Western Front. Happy letters full of wedding news were sent to the boys in France. These letters were shortly returned to sender, stamped A.B.P.O. DECEASED (Australian Base Post Office).

On 15th April 1917, the 12th Bn sector was attacked late at night by the Germans in an attempt to surprise and confuse the Australians. In the pandemonium Charlie disappeared along with his good friend Pte Dick Newman (from St Mary's). Charlie Gray was first listed as 'Killed in Action' on 20th April 1917 while his

mate Dick Newman was listed as 'Missing in Action' the same day (later amended to KIA on 4th May 1917). Taking as long as 3 weeks to confirm a soldier as Killed in Action gives an idea of how bitter and chaotic the fighting on the Western Front was. It is not known where Charlie Gray's body lies. Presumably it lies under tilled French fields, not far from Victor's body in Bapaume. While he has no formal grave, Charlie's name is honoured at Villers Bretonneux.

Charles (right)

In late April 1917, the boy's distressed family received telegrams notifying of their deaths. First Victor on 29th April 1917 and then Charlie on 4th May 1917. Upon receiving Victor's telegram, a devastated Louisa wrote to her son Charlie advising him of his brother's death. She adds in the brief postcard that she is 'nearly off her head with grief'. Little did she know that Charlie had also died in the night attack, 5 days after Victor.

Nursing injuries and illness in a hospital in England in August 1917, mate Charles Woolford wrote to John and Louisa Gray to provide them with details of their sons' deaths; a response to desperate letters from Louisa and John trying to find more information about their sons' deaths. Charles Woolford's letters are very carefully worded and give little actual information, no doubt to avoid being amended by censors. He initially wrote in late April 1917 that he was sure that Charlie Gray had been captured by the Germans but that he was 'sure he (Charlie) will be alright'. This hopeful letter would have been received by Charlie's parents only a few weeks after his death telegram arrived.



On 8th April 1918, nearly one year to the day after their deaths, sister Gladys gave birth to a baby girl, named *Victoria Charlotta* in memory of the uncles she would never know. In 1918, parents Louisa and John built a brick cottage at what is now known as Gray's Road, off Huon Road (Fern Tree). The house was named '*CharlVic Cottage*' in honour of the 2 boys. Two cypress trees were also planted behind the house. These trees were planted in view of the kitchen window, possibly so Louisa could see them as she went about her day caring for her large family.

Outliving her beloved sons by 50 years, Louisa died in June 1967, 3 months short of her 93rd birthday. She continued to visit the boys trees on Soldier's Walk up until her 80's, having a picnic every single Anzac Day with family members between the boy's trees and also visiting Soldier's Walk every Hobart Regatta Day.

The house and farm survived the 1967 bushfires and passed into the hands of brother George and then youngest brother Athol. In the late 1970's the property was purchased from Athol Gray by great nephew Paul Gray with whom it remains to this day. Ninety one years after their deaths, Charlie and Victor's tree's still stand in view of the kitchen window and their studio photo's are still proudly hung on the walls of CharlVic Cottage at Gray's Road, Fern Tree.

It is hoped that in 2009 a researched account of the two boys, their brief stint on the Western Front and their letters and postcards will be self-published by the Gray family.

Thanks to Duncan Kerr MHR, Member for Denison and his staff for producing this newsletter

**Provisional list for 90th Anniversary dedications,
Sunday August 3rd.**

Trees and names listed as **bold** already have plaques dedicated. These plaques will need to be returned for installation by July 1st 2008. Please contact Adrian Howard on 6234 4396 to arrange drop off or collection. If you are connected to any other serviceman listed please contact Adrian Howard to ensure your interest is registered. When the draft text has been written you will be contacted either by Adrian or Andrea Gerrard and sent the text for review.

If you wish to register your interest as a helper on the day, also call to register your interest. We will need assistance with parking, directing people to buses, trees, general information and helping during the actual ceremony.

416 Pte Charles William Thomas Gray 12th Bn Killed in Action 15/4/1917
417 Spr John Shadrack Pace 15th Field Co Aust Engineers Killed in Action 10/4/1918

420 Pte George Ernest Atkins 12th Bn Killed in Action 19/8/1916
421 Pte Arthur Fleming 12th Bn Killed in Action 6/10/1917

424 Pte Hugh Wallace 26th Bn Killed in Action 7/10/1917

425 Sgt Leslie Thomas George Chambers 61 12th Bn Killed in Action 3/11/1917
428 Pte William Henry Whelan 26th Bn Killed in Action 16/12/1917

429 Pte Adrian Edmund Husband 7th Field Amb Died Hobart 12/7/1916

430 Cpt Ivor Stephen Margetts 12th Bn Reported Killed in Action 24/7/1916
431 Spr Thomas William Albury 6th Field Coy Killed in Action 9/4/1918

477 Lt Samuel Alexander McInnes 40th Bn Killed in action 1/2/1917

479 Pte Archie Walter Owen 12th Bn Died of wounds 23/7/1918

481 L/Cpl Norman Wilfred Allison 3rd Field Ambulance Died of wounds 3/2/1918

483 Cpt Gilbert Thurgate Lovett 8th Bn Killed in Action 1/8/1918

V4 Pte Richard Samuel Wiggins 12th Bn Died of Sickness 5/7/1916

V5 Corporal Claude Henry Burslem 15th Bn Killed in action 8/8/1916

V6 Private John Stanley Cox 26th Bn Killed in action 5/11/1916

V7 2nd Lieut Morton Allport 70th Squadron RFC 10/11/1916

V8 Private Percy Edward Reed 12th Bn Killed in action 6/4/1917

432 Pte Albert Edward Talbot 26th Bn Killed in Action 29/7/1916

433 2/Lt Charles Stephen Fuller No1 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps 11/11/1917

434 Lt Arnold Talbot Wertheimer 12th Bn Killed in Action 04/06/1918

435 Pte Hughie McDonough 12th Bn Killed in Action 25/8/1918

437 Cpl Stanley Robert Carrick 12th Bn Killed in Action 10/5/1918

439 Lt Ben Vaughan 12th Bn Killed in Action 21/4/1918

441 Gnr Vernon Alfred Batchelor 4th Bde AFA Killed in Action 4/10/1917

443 Sgt Vernon Hepburn Drake 30th Bn Killed in Action 22/6/1918

445 Pte Albert Victor Larsen 12th Bn Killed in Action 28/05/1918

447 Pte Harold Horace Kennedy 51st Bn Killed in Action 24/4/1918

449 Pte Herbert Latham 46th Bn Killed in Action 14/2/1917

451 Pte Eric Samuel Kenshole 12th Bn Killed in Action 24/7/1916

453 Tpr Charles Ribbon NZ Mounted MG Sqd NZEF Died of wounds 17/3/1917

455 Pte Albert Cartledge 4th Pioneer Bn Died of wounds 6/7/1918

457 Tpr Henry Dundas Bashfield 3rd Light Horse Died of wounds 24/4/1917

459 Gnr Archibald Neville Scollick 5th Bde AFA Died of wounds 20/4/1917

461 Sgt Donald Trevlyn Hood 2nd Div HQ Killed in Action 29/10/1917

463 2/Lt Edward Huon Atkinson 12th Light Horse Died of war injuries 23/7/1918

465 Pte Frank King 15th Bn Killed in Action 2/5/1915

467 Sgt Hector Charles Long 40th Bn Killed in Action 28/3/1918

469 Pte William Cuthbert Hawkins 26th Bn Killed in Action 29/7/1916

471 Pte Roger (Third) Marshall AIBD Died of sickness Hobart 5/5/1916

473 L/Cpl Clement Woolley 52nd Bn Killed in Action 4/9/1916

475 Pte Arthur Wright 12th Bn Killed in Action 3/11/1917

V9 Private John Harris 12th Bn Killed in action 10/4/1917

V10 Private Thomas Joseph Beard 12th Bn Killed in action 15/4/1917

V11 Private Claude Arthur Butler 12th Bn Died of sickness 26/7/1917

V12 Corporal Charles Frederick Sharpe 2nd Bde AFA Killed in action 22/8/1917

V13 Private William John Hathaway 40th Bn Killed in action 13/10/1917

V14 Private Lewis William Mazey 40th Bn Killed in action 13/10/1917

V Trees are new sites to cover names on the Hobart Town Hall Honour Board listed as deceased but for whom there appears to have been no tree.

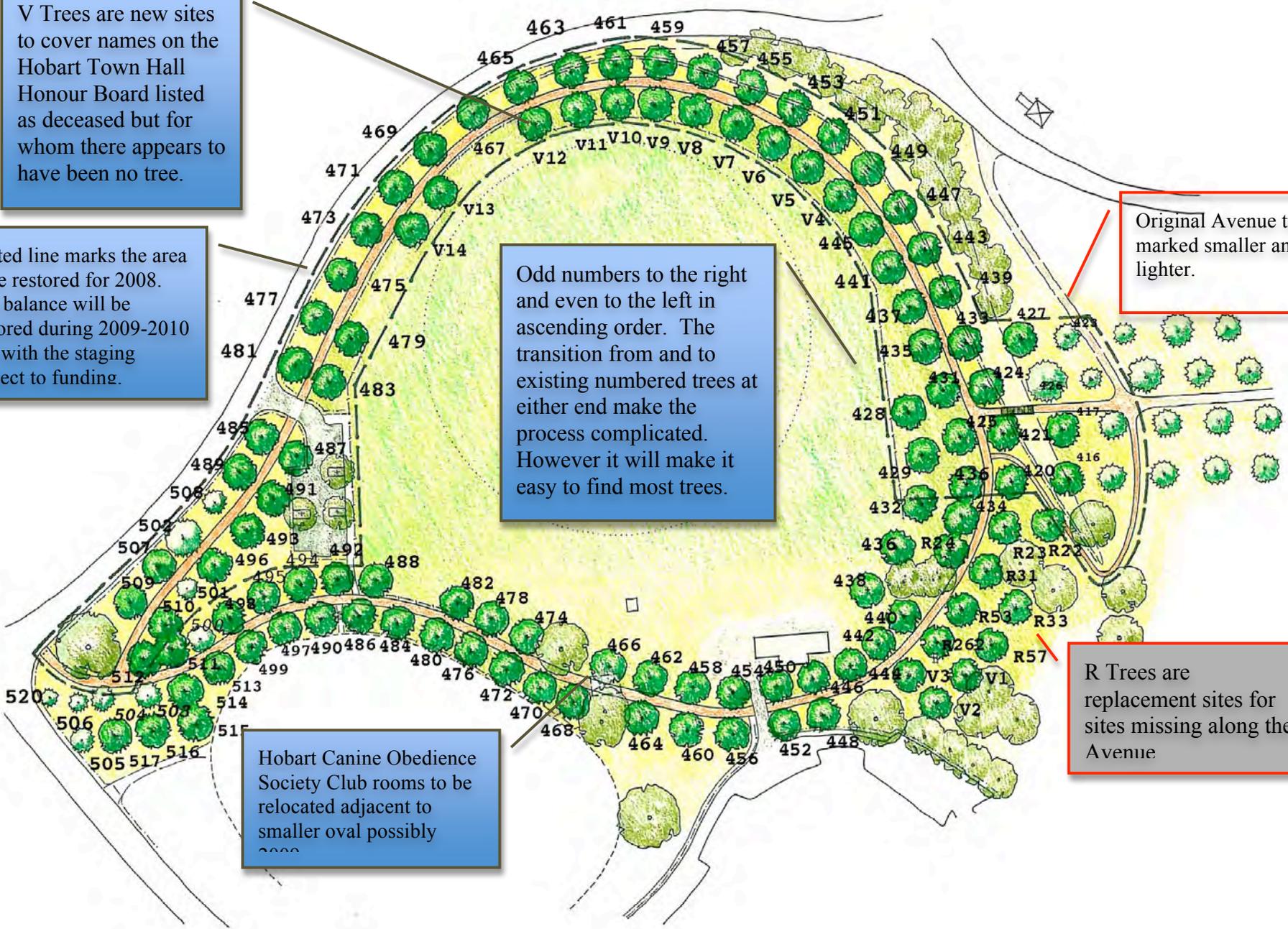
Dotted line marks the area to be restored for 2008. The balance will be restored during 2009-2010 and with the staging subject to funding.

Odd numbers to the right and even to the left in ascending order. The transition from and to existing numbered trees at either end make the process complicated. However it will make it easy to find most trees.

Original Avenue trees marked smaller and lighter.

R Trees are replacement sites for sites missing along the Avenue

Hobart Canine Obedience Society Club rooms to be relocated adjacent to smaller oval possibly 2000



Friends of Soldiers Memorial Avenue Inc. Membership Form

Name:

Postal Address:

Email Address:

Telephone (home): (work/mobile):

Newsletter Delivery Preference (please tick): **Via Post** **Via Email**

Subscriptions: Annual Membership is on a financial year basis from 1 July to 30 June: \$10.00
Membership Paid for Life is a once off payment: \$200.00

Membership type (please tick): **New** **Renewal** **Membership Paid for Life**

Do you wish to make a donation with this membership? (please tick): **General** **Plaque**

Total Amount included with this form (membership plus any donation): \$.....

Payments can be made by cheque or postal order posted to: FOSMA, GPO Box 1867, Hobart 7001. Or via direct deposit (you must include your name in the details/ comments box and send an email advising us):

Bank: Westpac Bank
Name of account: Friends of Soldiers Memorial Avenue Inc.
BSB number: 037-001
Account Number: 356809

Do you wish to nominate a Soldier of Interest commemorated on the Avenue? If so, please indicate below:

Soldiers Name: **Tree Number**

(Note: You must inform FOSMA if you wish to change any of the above details

Friends of Soldiers Memorial Avenue Inc.
GPO Box 1867, HOBART TAS 7001 E-mail: info@soldierswalk.org.au
Patron: His Excellency William Cox AC RFD ED Governor of Tasmania
President: J Wadsley Ph. 6248 7294, Secretary: A Gerrard Ph.6228 0543

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