

## The MEMORIAL TREES

In 1917, the Women's Recruiting Committee decided to plant trees in Eumundi's Main Street to commemorate the lives and service of 6 local soldiers who had died in the Great war. Another two tree planting ceremonies would later be required for a further 14 men.

Just one generation later, the Second World War witnessed a further 154 men enlist locally to serve the country. Seven memorial trees commemorate those who paid the ultimate sacrifice in this conflict.

By the 1970s many of the original trees had been replaced and some of the plaques had deteriorated or been lost. The Maroochy Shire Council made new plaques and a re-dedication ceremony was held by the Returned and Services League (RSL) in 1976. The old plaques were given to the recently formed Eumundi & District Historical Society and later became part of the Eumundi Museum's collection.

The name of the main street was changed to Memorial Drive in 1977 to further commemorate the fallen soldiers, following the Eumundi bypass which saw the Bruce Highway moved to the west of the town.

Every year, on Anzac Day and Remembrance Day, Eumundi commemorates the sacrifices of those who served in the First World War and other conflicts, as well as the servicemen and women who continue to serve, with a community walk along Memorial Drive.



The re-dedication ceremony  
in Gridley Street, 1976

## The FIRST TREE PLANTING, 1917

The first of the three memorial tree planting ceremonies was held on Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> October 1917. Despite early rain, a large crowd gathered in town to attend the service organised by the Women's Recruiting Committee. At 2 p.m. the pupils of Eumundi State School marched from the school to the middle of Gympie Street, where members of the Nambour Town Band opened with the national anthem, *God Save the King*. G.H. Cooke acted as master of ceremonies.

Appreciative speeches were made by Federal and Local politicians before a collection of £10 was raised to assist the committee. The band played other appropriate selections including *Australia Will Be There* and *In Memoriam*.

Six Queensland banyan trees (*Ficus Nitida*) had been donated by the Brisbane Botanical Gardens. Prior to the planting of each tree, Sergeant Busby announced the name, battalion and dates of death of the fallen soldiers whose sacrifice was being commemorated: privates H.W. Cooke; F.W. Clifton; J. Abraham; W.G. Wells; C. Stokes; and T. Downey. As soon as the last tree was planted, the *Last Post* was played on a bugle.

Afternoon tea was provided by the committee in the School of Arts hall, followed by a crowded evening concert.



The main street, early 1920s, showing the fenced memorial trees

## The SECOND TREE PLANTING, 1918

The second memorial tree ceremony was held a year later on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1918, just one month before the Great War finally ended. Preparations had been made for eleven trees by a Mr Donnelly before late news arrived that a twelfth would be required for his own son, Vincent Donnelly. Friends relieved the grief-stricken father of the work required.

Once again, proceedings began with the local pupils marching from the school to the School of Arts hall, led by a group of flag bearers, and accompanied by eight returned soldiers. The national anthem was followed by several patriotic speeches, including a frank one about the horrors of war and its aftermath by a returned soldier, Mr Warren.

The tree planting proceeded with Sergeant Russell announcing the names of each soldier, his corps and date of death. Dr Culpin planted a camphor laurel in memory of his son C.H. Culpin. Another camphor laurel was planted for Lance Corporal A. Stuart Russell by his father. Flame trees and weeping figs were then planted for Corporal F.T. Morgan; Signaller Walter Gridley; Sapper Norman Smith; and privates Henry Christian; Frank Colthup; Archibald McIntyre; Edward Allen; William Armfield; William Carroll; and Vincent Donnelly. *The Last Post*, sounded on the bugle, completed the ceremony.

A concert was held in the School of Arts hall that evening.



Eumundi celebrates the end of the Great War outside the Post Office, 1918.

## The THIRD TREE PLANTING, 1919

The third tree planting ceremony was held on Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1919, more than nine months after the war had ended, and nearly two months after the signing of the official peace treaty at Versailles.

Despite bad weather, a large crowd gathered at the corner of Gympie Street and Gridley Street to watch the local pupils march from their school accompanied by returned soldiers in uniform. Once again, G.H. Cooke acted as master of ceremonies. The crowd sang the national anthem, *God Save the King*, and several speeches were delivered. Two more soldiers from Eumundi were commemorated with trees and plaques: Privates Thomas Rubenach; and Cyril Abraham.

After the trees were planted, the *Last Post* was sounded and afternoon tea was provided by the Women's Patriotic Committee in the School of Arts Hall.

Arrangements were already in place for a 'Peace Ball' on the 5<sup>th</sup> September to welcome home the returned soldiers and celebrate the recent signing of the Treaty of Versailles.



The first two memorial trees planted, in front of the School of Arts Hall after many years' growth,

P-2041

## COMMEMORATING THE FALLEN OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

It was not until 2007 that the local servicemen who died during the Second World War were commemorated with a public memorial in Eumundi. Seven trees were planted in the park, adjacent to the trees along Memorial Drive that commemorated their departed brethren from the First World War.



Ordinary Seaman Charles Patrick died at sea, aged 18, aboard the *HMAS Sydney*, which was sunk by Germany off the coast of Western Australia on 19 November 1941.

Able Seaman Leonard Broomfield died at the age of 19, aboard the *HMAS Perth* when it was sunk by torpedos in the Sunda Strait on 1 March 1942.

Flight Sergeant Robert Lonergan was officially presumed dead following an aerial battle over Germany on 10 March 1942. He was 22 years old.

Sergeant Roy Mulcahy died in Libya at the age of 27, serving with the 2/32 Infantry Battalion in 1942.

Corporal Vincent O'Brien died in 1943 at a training camp in Queensland when he was knocked off a motorcycle by a passing truck. He was 23.

Private Albert Finney, who served with the 2/26 Infantry Battalion, died in Malaya in September 1943 at the age of 27 years.

Private Francis Broomfield died serving with the 2/48 Infantry Battalion at the Battle of Tarakan, Borneo, at the age of 24 years in June 1945.