



MEMORIAL GROVE

The establishment of the Memorial Grove project followed the publication of the Hale School Old Boys' Association publication, "Veldt to Vietnam - Haleians at War" [1994], written by the School Archivist/Curator, Mr Bill Edgar. The book records Haleians who served in all the conflicts in which Australia has been involved, from the Anglo-Boer War [1899-1902], through the Great War [1914-1919], the Second World War [1939-1945], the Korean conflict [1950-1953] and finally to the Vietnam War [1964-1972].

As is recognised on the back cover of the book:

'Few institutions in this country's history can boast an armed services involvement such as that of Hale School. In almost every theatre of war, through the Boer War, 1914-18 Great War, World War II to the Korean and then Vietnam conflicts, Haleians have been there.'

'There are over one hundred personal stories from this microcosm of Australian society. Each is different from the others, but the common thread is their old school which loomed large in their minds, whether they were on the perilous beaches of Gallipoli, in the appalling mud of the Flanders trenches, flying Hurricanes in Russia or suffering on the Burma-Thai railway. Those thoughts sustained them and helped, eventually, to bring most of them home.'

The construction of the Hale School Memorial Grove began in 1999 with an inaugural ceremony and the planting of pine trees on the 26th April 1999.

On Remembrance Day, 1999, the first fifteen commemorative plaques (numbers 1 to 15) were placed in the first of a series of limestone walls.

On the 10th November 2000, a further twenty eight plaques were placed in the Grove to commemorate Old Haleians who lost their lives while serving in the First World War on the Western Front.

Of those plaques:

Numbers 16 to 22 - commemorate Old Haleians fighting in the earliest theatres of war on the Western Front in France and Belgium, in which the Australian infantry divisions fought after their withdrawal from Gallipoli in December 1915.

Numbers 23 to 28 - commemorate Old Haleians who lost their lives after the Australian forces were moved northward to the region of Bullecourt in March, 1917.

Numbers 29 to 36 - commemorate Old Haleians who lost their lives after the Australian forces were again moved northward in 1917 into the Ypres, Belgian, sector of the line, in an attempt to break through the infamous Passchendale Ridge and on to capture the Channel ports.

Numbers 37 to 40 - commemorate Old Haleians who lost their lives after the Australian forces were moved back southward to the Somme Valley sector in France in time for the last ditch German "Michael" offensive of March and April in 1918. There, Australian troops helped turn the tide in the desperate fighting which took place around the town of Villers-Brettoneaux, within sight of the major French city of Amiens.

Numbers 41 to 43 - commemorate Old Haleians who lost their lives in the final phases of the war as the Australian forces supported the Allied offensive down the Somme Valley again.

On the 12th April 2001 eighteen plaques (numbers 66 to 83) were placed to commemorate Old Haleians who lost their lives serving in the Middle East.

Twenty-two plaques were placed on the 9th November 2001 (numbers 44 to 65) to commemorate Old Haleians who lost their lives serving with the Royal Air Force and the Royal Australian Air Force during the course of the Second World War, in the European Theatre of Operations.

On the 15th April 2002, nineteen plaques (numbers 84 to 102) were placed to commemorate 18 Haleians who lost their lives either in Australia or in the South-West Pacific Theatre of operations during the Second World War.

Nineteen plaques were placed on the 8th November 2002 (numbers 103 to 121) to commemorate the 17 Old Haleians who lost their lives between 1943 and 1945 in the South-West Pacific Theatre of Operations and in Australia during the course of the Second World War

On the 17th November 2003, three plaques were placed to commemorate three Old Haleians who lost their lives during the Korean conflict in 1951 and 52.

Plaque No 119:

John Irwin Vetter

John attended Hale School from South Perth between 1930 and 1936. His school report lists him as having average ability, having a poor attitude and being only fair at games.

After the outbreak of war, he joined the Royal Australian Air Force and trained as a flight mechanic. He was eventually posted to No 11 Squadron which operated Catalina flying boats on the long range patrols into enemy held territory to the north of Australia.

On one such operation the aircraft was forced down by Japanese aircraft. The crew were held in a native hut on the island of Ambon. While there they managed to carve their names and details into the roof timbers and they remained undiscovered by their captors until later in the war.

He and his fellow crew members, though prisoners-of-war, were executed at Ambon on the 6 February 1945. John was 24 years of age.

Today the John Vetter Memorial Prize is awarded annually to the Year 11 boy at Hale School who shows noteworthy application in both his studies and extra-curricular activities.

Placed by his boyhood friend, Haleian Hew Mellor.