

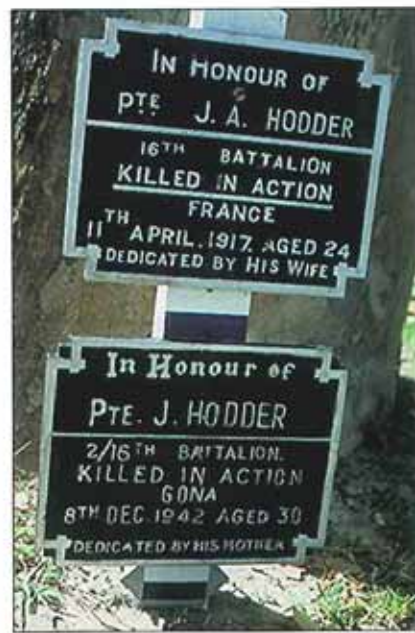
THE HONOUR AVENUES IN KINGS PARK

PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

BY PAUL WYCHERLEY



May Drive, *Eucalyptus botryoides* planted in 1940, except for some subsequent replacements with *Eucalyptus calophylla* and its variety *rosea*, of which the first tree on the left is a specimen.



A tree dedicated to father and son by the widow and mother.

Avenues of stone in ancient Egypt and of trees in imperial Persia and Rome were powerful metaphors for authority and military might. Except for some contemporary megalithic examples in Britain, few avenues were made during the Dark and Middle Ages. They emerged again during the Renaissance to emphasise the approach to a significant public building or notable residence.

Originally 'avenue' from a(d) venio simply meant the approach to some signal structure. The association with trees came later, when the strong symbolism of flanking rows of evenly aged and spaced trees, usually of one species, was realised and incorporated into the French and English landscapes and languages in the XVIIIth century.

Early examples were planted in England and Italy at the beginning of XVIth century. At the same time the 'allee', a walk or ride cut through dense woodland or passing between closely planted rows of trees, was developed in France. As the scale of the landscape at the command of landowners such as Louis XIV and Charles II and their nobility enlarged, so did that of the allée, avenue or vista created by their designers. These were almost invariably cut or planted in straight lines. The spacing of the trees was governed by rules according to the length of the approach,

so that the distant view of the feature was framed by the avenue.

The naturalistic school of 'Capability Brown' considered straight lines unnatural. Consequently many avenues were destroyed during the mid to late XVIIIth century in England. However, that did not deter the creation of some massive examples in Europe under Napoleon. Neither did it prevent the continuation of the tradition in North America, nor did it stop its introduction into the colonial empires of the XIXth and XXth centuries. Avenues of palms were popular in tropical countries. Meanwhile avenues developed as stand alone features in their own right. No longer having to frame a building at the end of a tunnel or nave-like approach, avenues could not only intersect or converge, but curve albeit gently.

Concurrently the planting of trees by dignitaries to mark significant events had become a worldwide practice. Nevertheless the planting of avenues of trees dedicated to service personnel (mainly sailors, soldiers and airmen, but some nurses) who gave their lives while serving their country seems to be an entirely Australian innovation. This unique practice originated in Victoria, specifically in Ballarat, in May 1917 when Mrs W.D. (Tilly) Thompson proposed to her staff at the clothing

manufacturers E. Lucas & Co that the 500 'Lucas girls' raise funds and plant an Honour Avenue. This they did, planting 3,912 trees along about 22.4km of the Western Highway between 3 June 1917 and 16 August 1919. In all, at least 128 avenues were planted in Victoria between 1917 and 1921, virtually every one a community effort.

Janine Haddow (*Landscape Australia* pp 306-309, 3/1988) examined the meaning of this new image. The carnage of the Great or First World War and the very large number of Australians who responded to the call to the colours resulted in almost every family being bereaved. There was a desire to recognise this sacrifice by community action in a living and growing way. An avenue satisfied these needs and by its uniformity symbolised not so much authority and power, but unity of purpose, equality of sacrifice and comradeship.

This idea was taken up in Western Australia by Mr Arthur Lovekin (born 1859), a veteran journalist, editor and owner of the *Daily News* and an original member since 1895 of Kings Park Board, to which he submitted on 2 August 1918 a design to plant May Drive (opened by Princess Mary on 23 July 1901) as an Honour Avenue. He had received from her (then Queen Mary) acorns of *Quercus robur* from Windsor ▶

Great Park, and the seedlings raised were to be used. He suggested a ceremonial opening of the first section on the anniversary in 1919 of the outbreak of the Great War (4 August 1914) and offered to bear the initial cost, which was readily accepted. He had personally encouraged Western Australians to enlist and sought an appropriate means to commemorate the fallen.

A month later the Board's President, Lord Forrest, died and Lovekin succeeded him. Lovekin was elected to the Legislative Council on 15 November 1919. He held these two positions until his death.

Preparations to open the first portion of the Honour Avenue from the 'intersection' (now the Forrest Memorial Circus) to the junction with the Subiaco entrance road (now Saw Avenue, which was already planted with palms) proceeded, but not altogether smoothly. The rather saline bore water allocated to Kings Park by the Water Board, unmixed with hills water reserved for domestic purposes, resulted in few Oaks from the Queen's acorns surviving in the nursery, perhaps only eleven. The Oak dedicated to Pte. W.E.G. Salter, planted at what was the beginning of May Drive and is now the beginning of Lovekin Drive, may be the sole survivor of the Windsor originals. The deficiency was made good by acorns supplied by Archbishop Riley from a tree planted by Bishop Hale 60 years before at Bishop's House, where Oaks still grow in the grounds, but it is uncertain if the original tree is one of them.

The firewood from clearing the tables on either side of May Drive was offered at 2 shillings a load, but there were few takers because of the additional cost of cartage, and most was burned on site. Gifts of manure ex-stable and dairy were received, some from residents and businesses in West Perth, but mainly from the Swan Brewery on Mounts Bay Road, which continued for many years to help Kings Park in this way.

Many name plaques were of poor quality and broke. Others were not delivered in time for the ceremony. The cost of dedicating a tree to a fallen comrade, or more usually to a family member, husband, son, brother or father, included the cost of the tree and the plaque, and mainly due to the rising cost of the latter, was increased from 10 to 15 shillings. £195 or enough for 260 trees was subscribed in this way, although eventually 404 trees were planted out for dedication on Sunday 3 August 1919. The trees were allocated by ballot.

The project would not have gone ahead had not the President made good his promise and donated £500 (\$1,000)

which would be worth at least \$23,000 today, perhaps more if the present labourer's daily wage of \$75 is compared with a 1919 War and Unemployed Distress Fund sustenance worker on 10s (\$1) per day, or 15s (\$1.50) per day for a regular gardener.

The ceremony was marred by heavy rain. A cable was received from Queen Mary, who may have thought that all were 'her' Oaks. There were speeches by the Governor of Western Australia, Sir William Macartney, the President of Kings Park Board, and the Hon. Minister for Mines John Scaddan and the Hon. Minister for Education Hal Colebatch. The Salvation Army Band, Boy Scouts, the children from Thomas Street School under their headmaster Mr John Tucker and a crowd of 2,000 participated.

The Board had then to maintain the existing features, such as the Main Drive and the Terraces, and the trees already planted, improve May Drive for motor traffic and prepare for planting the second half from Subiaco to Crawley Hill, now Poole triangle, from which to Crawley gates on Ferdinand Street (now Winthrop Avenue) the drive was already planted (1909) with WA Peppermints (*Agonis flexuosa*). For six months unemployed ex-servicemen were engaged on this and another 'third Honour Avenue'. The latter was pegged out in September and the trace cleared in December 1919. At that time the Main Drive went from the 'intersection' with May Drive through the present 'No. 1 carpark' and Botanic Garden along the scarp overlooking the river to the Crawley Hill, where May Drive rejoined it. The third Honour Avenue (now Lovekin Drive) was cut from the 'intersection' to rejoin the Main Drive at the present 'Flame' triangle. However, Lovekin intended the new Honour Avenue to commemorate John Forrest as well as fallen servicemen and it was referred to as Forrest Drive until a resolution of the Board on 22 October 1931, when Lovekin was absent terminally ill. The present naming was then decided; the Main Drive from the Main Entrance to the Forrest statue would be Fraser Avenue, the portion of the Main Drive to Crawley Hill would be Forrest Drive and the remainder to the Crawley gates would be Poole Avenue, May Drive to be as it was and is, and the third or new drive to be Lovekin (no longer Forrest) Drive.

The second half of the May Drive Honour Avenue did not progress any more smoothly than the first. There were delays in the supply of plaques from the State Implement Works at the quoted price of 6s 3d each. Oaks were no longer available and Planes (*Platanus x acerifolia*) had to be substituted.

There were difficulties in getting suitable plants at a satisfactory price. Eventually 280 trees were planted for the ceremony on 7 November 1920 attended by the Governor Sir Francis Newdegate, the President of Kings Park Board, the Minister for Education, the Mayor of Perth, Mr William Lathlain, the Salvation Army Band, the Boy Scouts and the over 1000 strong State Schools Choir under the baton of Mr Malcolm Uren.

Despite installation of a pipeline and taps for watering, constant vigilance to protect from bushfires, and weeding – sometimes of the couch grass planted along the avenues – the trees did not prosper. At first the Planes and then the Oaks became sickly and either died or made poor growth. Abundant crops of acorns sapped rather than demonstrated the vigour of the trees. Some trees were replaced, to deteriorate in turn. Supplies of manure were still received and applied. In 1922 the West Perth Sub-Branch of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (later known as the Public Service Sub-Branch of the Returned Services League which combined with the Press and Highgate Sub-Branches) undertook to assist the Board in the maintenance of the Honour Avenues, an association which continues to this day. They painted and replaced plaques and for many years donated a ton of blood and bone fertiliser annually. Eventually, after consultation between the Board and the League's Honour Avenue Committee, the Oaks and Planes were removed during 1940 to 1947 and replaced with Bangalay (*Eucalyptus botryoides*), the seed being taken from a large specimen planted earlier at May Drive Circus. Some of these have since required replacement, which has been with Marri (*Eucalyptus calophylla*) including the pink variety rosea. The eventual replacement of trees, whether individually or in groups, with the same or different species, has always been a major problem of maintaining avenues as landscape features.

After the planting and dedicating of May Drive, the Board under Lovekin's Presidency turned its attention to the 'third' avenue, Forrest (now Lovekin) Drive. To pay for it a 'Shilling Fund' was launched on 26 November 1920 by one Board Member, Mr (later Sir) William Loton, contributing 10,000 shillings (£500), which was promptly matched with a like sum by the President; however, few others followed, despite promises of public acknowledgement in the *Daily News*.

Progress was slow. In July 1927 it was reported that 16 trees had been planted in the new Honour Avenue and another 20 were ready. It was agreed to clear

another 96 chains (1.93km) for planting. Ex-miners suffering from the Miner's Disease (silicosis) were employed on this work. The cost to sponsors was £4 per tree and a deputation in September 1927 asked for this to be reduced. At first this request was refused; however, a cost of £2.10s was agreed in December 1930 and finally £1 in February 1932. Red Flowering Gums planted along Kings Park Road were offered as substitutes at £2 in June 1928, but there were no takers.

As his health deteriorated, the completion of Forrest Drive became a matter of urgency for Arthur Lovekin and he was visited in hospital by the Board's Secretary, Mr Lionel Boas, to discuss the matter prior to the Board meeting held on 16 September 1931. At first Lovekin was inclined to donate the entire £1612 for works including bitumenising the Honour Avenue, but on learning that substantial Traffic Fees would be received by the Board he reduced this to £700. Later that afternoon the meeting adjourned and the Board visited Mr Lovekin in hospital, where he was attended by his daughter Miss Ada Lovekin. His wife Elizabeth (nee Letchen) had predeceased him two years earlier. The Board suggested that the Traffic Fees were needed for other purposes, but Mr Lovekin remained firm in his offer and a cheque for £700 was received from Miss Lovekin. Two weeks later the Board waited on Mr and Miss Lovekin at their home and told him that the Government Grant had been reduced by £480. Lovekin agreed to contribute £300 towards the shortfall and later to donate £180 towards water supply for the new Honour Avenue. At about the same time he sent £100 to the Superintendent John Heath as a bonus of £5 for each of the seven staff and £10 for Heath, the balance to be spent as Heath thought fit; it was used to purchase equipment for the Park.

The Hon. Arthur Lovekin died on 10 December 1931. However, the £480 promised had not been paid to the Board. After expressing their condolences to the bereaved, the Board on 21 January 1932 instructed the Secretary to wait on Miss Lovekin and ask if the promised donation would be forthcoming; and shortly afterwards she sent £500 to the Board. During the depression years the value of money increased and an 18% wages cut was imposed about this time under the Financial Emergency Act; consequently Miss Lovekin's gift of £500 would be worth about \$24,000 in present day terms. So the Lovekin family contributed at least £1,880 (now worth \$90,000) to Honour Avenue projects alone, perhaps more with other unrecorded gifts, apart from

donations for play equipment, for the staff and for various functions.

Following Lovekin's death the Presidency passed to Mr William Vincent, who resigned in August 1932 and was succeeded by Sir William Lathlain for the next four years. One of two new members appointed to the Board in January 1932 was Mr Stephen Kessell, Conservator of Forests, who even before his appointment was required to comment on suitable trees for the new Avenue. Up to 150 trees of different kinds may have been planted from one end of the Avenue, but some were probably replacements for earlier plantings which had failed over the previous five years, as in June 1932 there were only 52 mixed trees surviving in the Avenue.

Advocates of planting Australian or Western Australian trees were beginning to be heard. Introduced Oaks and Planes had not been a success, except where the water table was high or irrigation adequate. However, experience with native trees was little better. The popular WA Red Flowering Gums (*Eucalyptus ficifolia*) planted along the Main Drive (Fraser Avenue) in 1898 began to be lost to termites and patch canker from 1924 onward; nevertheless more were planted in the Centenary Year 1929. From 1938 onward they were replaced with Lemon Scented Gums (*Eucalyptus citriodora*), now acclaimed as one of the best avenues standing in Australia today. A few Red Flowering Gums survived from the original Main Drive planting and rather more of those planted along Kings Park Road in the late 1920s.

Kessell recommended Lemon Scented Gums as the first choice for Lovekin Drive, with Norfolk Island Pines (*Araucaria heterophylla*) or Sugar Gums (*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*) as alternatives. After further discussion the last were adopted and seedlings were ordered from the Hamel Nursery. Criticism came from both sides. Some complained that Sugar Gums were not Western Australian, to which it was answered that the Board including Mr Kessell thought they were the Australian trees most likely to succeed. On the other hand the President of the Returned Services League expressed concern that the 52 trees already sponsored, planted and surviving (apparently mainly Oaks and Planes again) would be removed. It was explained that Sugar Gums had better prospects and would enable a formal uniform avenue to be planted throughout the length of Lovekin Drive. A circular letter was sent to the sponsors of the 52 surviving trees and 30 responded in favour of their removal. As a consequence 340 Sugar Gums were planted during mid-1932 in Lovekin Drive, of which the first 100 were im-

mediately dedicated to Great or First World War dead. Incidentally a start was made on an avenue of Norfolk Island Pines along the Thomas Street frontage of Kings Park; some of these trees still stand.

On 30 June 1938 Heath retired and the next day was succeeded as Superintendent by John Watson, a Gallipoli Veteran and Military Medalist, who had already had an innovative career in the Forests Department. Eight years later, after the Second World War (1939-1945) had taken its toll, Watson proposed through the then President Mr William Saw that the remainder of 300 Sugar Gums in Lovekin Drive be dedicated to fallen servicemen of that later conflict. Since the trees were already established, this would take the form of placing plaques bearing the rank, name, unit, age, and the manner, date and place of death for each individual, as in the previous Honour Avenue. The Board agreed, provided that the administration of the allocation of trees and manufacture of the plaques was carried out by the RSL. This was undertaken by the Public Service Sub-Branch.

The Dedication by the Anglican Archbishop of Perth Dr R.W.H. Moline M.C. on 5 December 1948, in the presence of Governor Sir James Mitchell, was organised by the Public Service Sub-Branch; speeches were given by Sub-Branch President Mr L.J. Parks and Secretary Mr A.M. Brice, the principal address was delivered by the RSL State President. Mr W.J. Hunt and the RSL Memorial Band were in attendance. For the first time the Honour Avenue in Kings Park included a tree dedicated to a woman, and two trees dedicated to War Correspondents. Also, one tree was dedicated to two soldiers, father and son, killed in action in the First and Second World Wars respectively.

Another feature was the dedication of 46 trees, 23 on each side in a southern section of Lovekin Drive, to members of the 2nd Australian Independent Company and the 2nd/2nd Australian Commando Squadron. During the ensuing years the unit association concerned arranged for the grassing, irrigation and kerbing of this section and the erection in 1963 of signs to designate it. In 1973 a memorial stone and tablet were placed, recording the names of the 52 members of this unit who lost their lives on active service. Six trees have been doubly dedicated enabling all 52 members to be commemorated both by trees and on the memorial.

In 1961 a strip on the northern side of Forrest Drive and the Poole triangle linking the May and Lovekin Honour Avenues was cleared and planted to provide another 25 trees, although one



Lovekin Drive, *Eucalyptus cladocalyx* planted in 1932.

"A classical symbol of power has become a modern metaphor for community"

of these was an already established native sheoak (*Allocasuarina fraseriana*). Four Stone Pines (*Pinus pinea*) have also been dedicated. Six Sugar Gums were removed from Lovekin Drive when the Vista through Kings Park was made in 1966. There are now 686 trees in May Drive and 418 in Lovekin Drive, commemorating 1111 individuals or in some cases units. Of these 786 (71%) relate to the First World War, 324 (29%) to the Second World War, and one to the United Nations Campaign in Korea. These may be compared with approximately 7000 whose names are recorded on the State War Memorial for the First World War, 4000 for the Second, and 98 in subsequent campaigns. The 41 who died in the South African War were recorded on a separate memorial in 1901. The trees commemorate predominantly Army personnel, but 30% of those in the Second World War were from the RAAF.

That only about one in ten of those who gave their lives as recorded on the State War Memorial were commemorated with trees dedicated to them in the Honour Avenues was a source of disappointment to the Hon. Arthur Lovekin and to his successors in office or inspiration, such as John Watson,



An Oak, *Quercus robur*, dedicated to Pte W.E.G. Salter.

who was also at one time Warden of the State War Memorial. Nevertheless those remembered in the Honour Avenue constitute a cross-section of those who died. Readers of the plaques, which give more detail than the War Memorial inscriptions, cannot fail to realise the poignancy of the ages of the fallen, the manner of their deaths, killed or missing in action, died of wounds or as a prisoner of war, and the dedications by parents, widows, siblings, children or comrades. Despite the set-backs in choice and growth of the trees and the need for replacements, reflecting perhaps the vicissitudes of those commemorated, the Honour Avenues stand now as fine features to remind us of the comrades in arms who won our present freedoms, of their sufferings and the traumas of their bereaved loved ones. From origins in what might be regarded as the paternalistic generosity of the Hon. Arthur Lovekin, the present care of the avenues is in the joint hands of the Kings Park Board and the Returned Services League Honour Avenue Committee. A classical symbol of power has become a modern metaphor for community.

