

RSL WA Project to Enhance May Circle, Kings Park



Kings Park Honour Avenue - May Drive

May Drive in Kings Park was opened on 23 July 1901 by Princess May, Duchess of Cornwall and York, later Queen Mary.

May Drive became the first Honour Avenue in Kings Park and Botanic Garden in 1919. Relatives and friends of men and women who died during World War I (1914-1918) planted 400 oak and plane trees during a planting ceremony.

A message from Queen Mary was read to those assembled at the dedication. Her words were, "May these fine oaks grow and flourish for many years, and stand as a reminder to generations to come of the devotion and loyalty of those brave sons of the Empire who gave their lives in the cause of justice and freedom" (Queen Mary, 1919)

When the trees failed to prosper, they were replanted with Bangalay (*Eucalyptus botryoides*) in the 1940s. Today, there is one oak left standing - at the corner of May and Lovekin Drives, adjacent to the Forrest statue.

May Circle Project of the RSL WA Branch

May Circle is an historic landmark located along May Drive in Kings Park but is not identified as such to the public.



This Honour Avenue comprises nearly 700 eucalyptus trees, each having one or more dedicated plaques to commemorate Western Australian servicemen and women who died overseas in time of war.

Every year members of the Returned & Services League of Australia, Highgate Sub-Branch, through the Honour Avenues Group, hold four dedication services in Kings Park for families and friends who wish to honour the fallen. The tradition of dedicating a plaque in the memory of those who gave their lives began in 1919.

Lovekin Drive, named in 1931, commemorates Arthur Lovekin, second President of the Kings Park Board and the man responsible for the initiation of the Honour Avenues.

RSLWA accepted responsibility for the maintenance and preservation of the plaques along Kings Park's Honour Avenues in 1922. The first Honour Avenue was dedicated to 404 fallen soldiers in August 1919 on the fifth anniversary of the outbreak of World War I. The responsibility of maintenance was delegated to the RSLWA's West Perth Sub-Branch, later known as the Public Service Sub-Branch, which amalgamated with the Press Sub-Branch in 1973. In 1976, it combined with the Highgate Sub-Branch which assumed responsibility for the plaques.

After World War II, many requests were received by Kings Park to dedicate additional trees to servicemen and women who had died at war. The Kings Park Board asked RSLWA to arrange a dedication ceremony for three hundred sugar gums in Lovekin Avenue.

The RSLWA Sub-Branch formed a committee to allocate the trees and arrange the service. The committee consisted of Messrs. LJ Parkes, President, AM Brice, Secretary, WL Boyd, Treasurer and HB Hayles, MJ Offer and Secretary of the Kings Park Board JE Watson as Members. On 5 December, 1948, His Grace the Archbishop of Perth Dr RWH Moline MC DD dedicated Lovekin Drive to the memory of those who fell in World War II. His Excellency the Governor Sir James Mitchell GCMG also attended. The total number of plaques required for this dedication could not be produced in time and consequentially additional, smaller ceremonies were held in 1950 and 1952. At the base of each tree in the Honour Avenues is a plaque inscribed with the name of the deceased, age, date and manner of death and who dedicated the plaque.



There are currently over 1600 memorial plaques in Kings Park and since 1922 the Honour Avenues group has worked in a voluntary capacity to maintain them. The Honour Avenues Group, which today is a sub-committee of the Highgate RSL, researches each of the fallen members and gives an overview of their service and character at the dedication service. They are also responsible for the development and maintenance of the data base of plaques. In addition, they provide an ongoing program of maintenance and upkeep of all 1600 plaques and work tirelessly in a voluntary capacity to ensure that all the plaques are beautifully maintained. They meet each Tuesday and Thursday at Kings Park and are currently replacing all the older cast iron plaques with aluminium plaques.

Each year on the day before ANZAC Day, they work with students from Carine Senior High School to ensure that each plaque is cleaned. They then place a posy of flowers and the Australian Flag alongside each of the plaques.

The Returned & Services League WA (RSLWA) in partnership with the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority (BGPA), plans to upgrade May Circle to provide a landscaped and interpreted memorial space in Kings Park to commemorate the centenary and to provide an appropriate setting and facilities for future dedication ceremonies, commemorating May Circle as the historic site of the inaugural dedication ceremony for the Honour Avenues throughout Kings Park.

Community Benefit

- An estimated 1000 participants attend the Dedication Ceremonies in May Circle each year; and,
- Around 5.85 million visitors come to Kings Park annually to enjoy its varied attractions and facilities, many of whom visit the range of memorials and drive, walk or cycle along the Honour Avenues.

Funding required is currently estimated to be around \$560,000.

The anticipated date for completion is November 11, 2018 in commemoration of Armistice Day and the end of WW1.

WAGS are pleased to be able to support the RSL WA project through [donations to the Cheops Commemorative event photos](#)

. Along with the RSL we believe that putting the funding towards this project is particularly appropriate given May Circle sits within Kings Park and has many 11th Battalion plaques along the avenue.

WAGS 11Bn Commemorative Service photos are available here: [Together 100 Years Apart - Cheops Commemorative service photos](#)