

Port Elliot Soldiers Memorial Gardens Contemplation Garden

Over the last two years the Port Elliot Town and Foreshore group of volunteer gardeners have begun developing a weedy former rubbish tip next to the Soldiers Gardens with native plants. This work has revealed a stunning view of Horseshoe Bay as the feral plants were removed. A small section is planted with red, white and blue flowering plants to represent the French flag and the sacrifice by Australian soldiers in France. We decided then to create something special for all to enjoy in this location.

The background to our submission

When World War 1 ended and battle weary soldiers returned to their families in the small seaside town of Port Elliot there were two sorts of grieving. One was by the families whose sons and brothers lay on foreign soil and one was by the hollow eyed returnees who looked to the ocean and the peaceful town to take away their nightmares.

The townsfolk showed an understanding that psychologists and therapists are only just understanding. That nature and gardens can be instrumental in the healing process. The Botanic Gardens in Adelaide has developed a Garden of Health with this understanding.

In Port Elliot in 1918 the town set to work. The Cheer Up Society called the people of Port Elliot together to plant trees to commemorate the sacrifice of those who died. On the previously railway land volunteers laboured to establish level areas and to plant trees. This was for the living - the beautiful Soldiers Memorial Gardens. These were to be a serene and beautiful healing area. Researchers now know that visiting a garden can give you a great sense of wellbeing, that it can relax the mind and reduce stress levels.

Our Submission

With Member for Mayo Rebekah Sharkie's support we applied for a DVA Grant to create a Contemplation Site in the Soldiers Memorial Gardens area. We received \$8,000.

On the hill behind the Port Elliot Lifesaving Club with arguably the best view in Port Elliot are four curved seats in a peaceful sheltered position, backed by sandstone walls with old brick paving to define the area. The area continues the theme of stone walls around Port Elliot. Local stonemason Paul Freebairn has completed the stone walls and when the plantings are completed and the seats built we are sure this will be a popular area with locals and visitors alike.

A plinth will contain a copy of a poem written in the 1950's by Margaret McEwin.

Sue Dixon
June 2019

TREES OF REMEMBRANCE AT PORT ELLIOT

On the sheltered slope overlooking the bay
Rows of pine trees stand
Each for a youth who went away
To fight for his native land

And a little white tablet under each tree
With the date of his death and his name
A silent reminder to you and to me
Of the price that was paid for our fame

Today on the beach with bucket and spade
Sandcastles with turret and tower
Our children build where those dear lads played
Dreaming nought of a lust for power.

The sea seems restless and ill at ease
Does it miss those boys on the shore?
It knows that in ships each one of these
Sailed out but came home no more.

But these splendid trees their vigil keep
Tall "masts" against the sky
They guard on that hallowed hillside steep
Names that shall never die

Margaret McEwin
The Bunyip - Gawler SA - 1953





Initial plantings after removal of feral plants. These were hand watered over summer. It is an extremely difficult site for plants to survive.



Safer path as constructed by Alexandrina Council to this area. They will also construct the wooden seats on the stone supports.



Stone Mason Paul Freebairn commencing work on the wall.



The wall slowly growing.



The rough area below the Contemplation Site to be planted in June 2019 by 300 students from Port Elliot Primary School with plants donated by Adelaide & Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management.



The area in the 1930's



Contemplating the finished walls and paving

