



# Veterans' & Families Garden Plot

## Tasmanian Community Food Garden

### Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens



#### THE TASMANIAN CENTENARY OF ANZAC LONE PINE PROJECT

### Battle of Lone Pine

The Battle of Lone Pine was fought on a ridge line at Gallipoli between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of August 1915. The battle was originally intended as a diversion as other Australian, New Zealand, British and Indian units attempted to break through the Turkish encirclement further to the north at Chunuk Bair. The attack was launched in the late afternoon of the 6<sup>th</sup> of August by the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF). The Turkish forces were well entrenched and while the main Turkish trench was taken in the initial 20 minutes of the attack, the battle raged for a further four days as the Turkish forces mounted a series of counter-attacks to re-take the lost ground. The fighting at Lone Pine was very intense and mostly hand to hand combat in the trenches. In fact the trench fighting at Lone Pine became the benchmark by which the ANZACs gauged the later trench warfare in France and Belgium. It is an indication of the intensity of the fighting at Lone Pine that there were seven Victoria Crosses awarded, over 2,000 Australian casualties and nearly 7,000 Turkish casualties.

### The origin of the name Lone Pine

There are two usages of the term Lone Pine. The ridge and battle at Gallipoli allegedly derived its name from a solitary 'lone' pine tree which didn't survive the battle. When a pine tree grown from a seed brought back from Lone Pine was planted at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra in 1934, construction of the building was only just beginning and that tree was also referred to as the 'lone' pine.

### Aleppo Pine (*Pinus Halepensis*) in Australia

In addition to the lone pine tree on the battlefield on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 1914, the Turkish defences had been constructed from locally felled pine as well as pine brought from other locations. The main Turkish trenches were actually covered with these pine trunks, and it was this covering which contributed to the intensity of the fighting in the battle.

There were two sets of pine cones brought back from Lone Pine by Australian soldiers. Lance Corporal Benjamin Charles Smith of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion collected several pine cones from the battlefield and sent them home to his mother who lived at Inverell in NSW. She left the seeds in a drawer for 13 years before sowing them. She successfully raised two trees, one was planted at Inverell and the second was planted at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra in 1934 by HRH Prince Henry, the Duke of Gloucester.

Sergeant Keith McDowell of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Battalion claimed that he collected a pine cone from the remains of that solitary tree on the battlefield. On his return from the war he gave it to his aunt Emma Gray who lived near Warrnambool in Victoria. Twelve years later she planted the seeds, five sprouted and four survived. One tree was planted at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne in 1933 while the others were planted at Wattle Park in Camberwell in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, the Warrnambool Botanic Gardens and The Sisters near Warrnambool.

So while we are not sure if the seeds did come from the solitary tree at Gallipoli, we do know that they came from the battlefield at Lone Pine. The trees in Australia have been identified as *Pinus Halepensis*, the Aleppo Pine.

### **The Tasmanian Pedigree**

Stephan Mucha was born in Poland. He fought against the Germans in World War Two in North Africa and then in Italy, including at the Battle of Monte Casino. After the war he immigrated to Tasmania. Stephan was a strong supporter of Hobart Legacy and also the Military Museum at Anglesea Barracks. Sometime in the period 1972-1988 Stephan went to Canberra and harvested seeds from the Lone Pine growing at the Australian War Memorial. He successfully grew a number of Lone Pine trees in the old nursery at Anglesea Barracks. These trees were then presented to veteran and community groups around Tasmania.

One of the trees grown by Stephan was planted at the Cornelian Bay War Cemetery for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hobart Legacy. In 2013 it was identified that the tree had to be removed. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July Alistair Hodgman, an arborist at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens collected approximately 300 seeds from the tree before it was felled. Those seeds were then placed in the seed bank at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens.

### **The Centenary of ANZAC Lone Pine Project**

In July 2014 two groups joined forces to grow a new generation of Lone Pine trees for Tasmanian schools, veteran and community groups. Students from Rose Bay High School combined with the Veterans' and Families Garden Plot from the Tasmanian Community Food Garden to each sow 100 seeds under the guidance of the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens Nursery. It is intended that the high school seedlings will be grown in a special glass house at the school while the other seedlings will remain in the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens Nursery.

M.J. Romalis  
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17<sup>th</sup> September 2014

### **Sources:**

1. Australian War Memorial Website
2. Australian Geographic *Lone Pine: Seeds grown into a living memorial* 11 Oct 2011 by Aaron Smith
3. Stephan Mucha Project Notes – Hobart Legacy Inc.