QUEENSLAND WAR MEMORIALS:
A Slide Presentation

Shirley and Trevor McIvor

To prepare Salute the Brave: A Pictorial Record of Queensland War Memorials, in 1992-93 Shirley and Trevor McIvor travelled 40,000 km, criss-crossing Queensland at weekends and on recreation leave. Between them they took 8,500 colour photographs and 4,000 transparencies: they visited 311 separate centres, being unable to get to the remaining 14 centres in the far west or far north of Queensland, from which contributed photos were received.

The ICOMOS slide presentation commenced with Aboriginal tributes: the first Australian Aboriginal war memorial, dedicated at Burleigh Heads, Gold Coast, on 21 April 1991; a tribute to the Kalkadoon and Mitakoodi Aborigines on the Barkly Highway between Cloncurry and Mount Isa; and the Jimmy Crow memorial, after whom Crows Nest, Queensland, was named (Fig. 1).

Several Boer War tributes were then shown, including the little known Mafeking Bell (Mount Morgan), Mafeking Tree (Ingham), and Coronation Memorial (King Edward VII, 26 June 1902), which is combined with a Boer War tribute (Mount Morgan). The first Boer War digger memorial erected in Queensland (Allora) was shown, as well as the only known Boer War veteran’s grave (Toowong), and the Boer War kiosk (Charters Towers) (Fig. 2). Tributes to War nurses followed, including the War Nurses Pavilion at Bundaberg which was re-dedicated in August, 1995 as part of Australia Remembers.

Although just over the road from the Bundaberg Base Hospital, current nurses did not realise its significance until enquiries were made by the McIvors at the Hospital and in the local News Mail at the end of 1992. Nurses, City Council and the local Ex-Servicewomen’s Association have combined in the re-dedication project. Memorials at Caloundra, Coolangatta and Cylinder Head (North Stradbroke Island), remembering the sinking of the hospital ship Centaur on 14 May, 1943 were followed by tributes to Sister Elizabeth Kenny, a World War I nurse who later gained world wide fame for her treatment of poliomyelitis, and who is buried at Nobby on the Darling Downs.

In 1942-1943 North Queensland was under constant threat of invasion, and many tributes were erected in 1992 during the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Battle of the Coral Sea. Tributes at Cairns, Townsville, Cardwell, the Atherton Tableland and other centres were shown. The Brisbane Line of Defence memorials were represented by slides from Brymaroo (Canberra bomber), 3CR RAAF Kowguran (Possum Park - underground explosives bunkers transformed into RAAF display, recreation and accommodation units), and Tenterfield (tank traps to prevent Japanese tanks entering NSW from Queensland).

Queensland’s Victoria Cross winners are honoured with memorials at Townsville (Private Jimmy Gordon, Syria), Crows Nest (Corporal John French, Milne Bay), and Ingham (Warrant Officer Keith Payne, Vietnam). Some of Queensland’s 55 remaining World War I digger memorials were shown, followed by the first World War I memorial in Queensland (Nobby Cemetery, Victor Denton killed at Gallipoli in June 1915), the first example outside of a cemetery (Toogoolawah), and the first digger in Brisbane (East Brisbane). The latter, also pictured, is framed by cannon formerly from Fort Lytton, Brisbane’s early defence centre at the mouth of the Brisbane River.

Examples of seemingly inappropriate repair work on memorials were shown - a painted digger with a pink and red headgear...
black rifle (Tingalpa); white paint splashed on the memorial when steps were repainted white (Mitchell), and peeling paint and a substitute corner post (Bajool). These were contrasted with a small country settlement memorial (Degilbo) which, although in a large paddock, is kept mowed and has a protective fence around the original fence. Queensland’s only privately erected memorial bridge (Brooweena-Woolooga Road) was also depicted. Impressive memorials at Toowoomba, Townsville, Rockhampton and Maryborough were contrasted with picturesque Linville, a very small centre with immaculate gardens and lawns around its war memorial.

Memorial gates, seats, and halls were also shown, followed by a selection of different types of war memorials across Queensland. The final few slides represented the restored Emerald railway station, the world’s only memorial hall to an insect (Cactoblastis Hall at Boonarga), the black stump from which Queensland’s mapping was aligned (Blackall), and the Banjo Patterson memorial at Winton, where 100th anniversary celebrations of the writing of Waltzing Matilda were in full swing during the ICOMOS Conference and over Easter 1995. The final slide featured the ODE and wreaths at the Maroochydore memorial, a reminder that war memorials honour people, not war. The McIvors offered the pictorial showing as their personal Salute to the Brave.

The background, motivation and indefatigable energy of these two people is just as fascinating as their presentation and the biography provided by them has been included in greater than usual detail, Ed.

Shirley and Trevor McIvor, both 63, live in Toowoomba and take on unusual projects. Prior to marriage in 1957, Shirley worked intermittently in Canberra between 1950 and 1957, first with the Immigration Department, including a time as Assistant Secretary to Hon Harold Holt; and later as Assistant Private Secretary to Hon Sir Charles Davidson, Postmaster-General and Minister for Navy, at the time when television was introduced to Australia in 1956. In 1965 they founded the Space Pilots’ Club, a Christian youth group which they led for its first 27 years.

In late 1983 Trevor, an electrical fitter, received a severe electric shock which has continuing repercussions. He was advised he could be in a wheelchair by 1985, so Shirley and Trevor travelled widely across the Darling Downs and Sunshine Coast and prepared two booklets on Wheelchair Access to Recreation so they and others would know where they could go with a wheelchair. Trevor is still mobile, but it had been noted that most centres of
population have a war memorial which could provide a thread of interest for travellers unable to leave their car.

Shirley’s father was an original ANZAC and they have an ANZAC Memorial Room at their home, so an interest in war memorials seemed a natural progression. They approached the USQ Press at the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, where Shirley worked in the Psychology Department, with the suggestion that a book on war memorials on the Darling Downs and Sunshine Coast be prepared. USQ Press was interested, but only if the whole of Queensland was covered. This was an entirely different, daunting, and very expensive undertaking but they went ahead.

On Remembrance Day, 1994, Salute the Brave: A Pictorial Record of Queensland War Memorials was launched in Brisbane by Hon Sciacca. At the launch he surprised everyone by stating that as a result of the interest in war memorials the authors had aroused in him over a period, Operation Restoration to the tune of $10 million had been launched to ensure Australia’s war memorials were restored in the year Australia Remembers. Since then the McIvor's have upgraded the written and photographic records of the Australian Heritage Commission on Queensland war memorials, resulting in the invitation to participate in this ICOMOS Conference.

They have also prepared a book on the history of the WWII RAAF Base at Evans Head, NSW, being authored by two ex-WAAFs, and are involved in the preparation of two computer CD ROMS. The first is on Gallipoli, and includes a profile on Lieutenant George Edward Jamieson, MC, Shirley’s father. In between preparing seed bells and feeding hundreds of lorikeets, galahs, kookaburras, magpies, currawongs, possums and blue tongued lizards, which feast daily in their backyard, Trevor has 3,150 colour photos prepared for a second CD ROM on Queensland War Memorials while Shirley is preparing the data base.