

Planting of Oak Tree
to
Commemorate the occasion of
Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's
Jubilee Accession to the Throne
by
Logan K Howlett
Mayor, City of Cockburn
Monday 6 February 2012
at
Manning Park, Hamilton Hill

Good afternoon and welcome to today's diamond jubilee celebration of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's accession to the throne 60 years ago.

It is only the second diamond jubilee in one thousand years of monarchs, the other occasion being Queen Elizabeth II great, great grandmother, Queen Victoria who reigned from 1837 to 1901.

I acknowledge and thank the Reverend Sealin Garlett for his 'Welcome to Country'.

Sealin is highly respected and together with his wife Marilyn they continue to provide an invaluable service to the people of our community and wider afield.

The HALO Boys spirit dances have provided a unique atmosphere to this commemorative service and I thank them for their energy, enthusiasm and professionalism.

I acknowledge the Nyungar people who are the Traditional Custodians of the Land on which we are meeting today.

I pay respect to the Elders both past and present of the Noongar Nation and extend that respect to other Indigenous Australians who are present today.

I acknowledge the presence of:

Ms Melissa Parke MP, Member for Fremantle;

Ms Lynne MacLaren, MLC South Metropolitan Region;

The Honourable Simon O'Brien MLC South Metropolitan Region;

The Honourable Phil Edman, MLC South Metropolitan Region;

The Honourable Kate Doust, MLC South Metropolitan Region;

The Honourable Nick Goiran MLC South Metropolitan Region;

The Honourable Sue Ellery MLC South Metropolitan Region;

The Honourable Francis Logan, MLA Member for Cockburn;

Mr Joe Francis, MLA Member for Cockburn;

Mr Don Miguel OAM JP& Freeman of our City and his wife June;

Mr Ray Lees JP & Freeman of our City and his daughter Glenda;

Deputy Mayor Kevin Allen and his wife Debra;

Councillor Carol Reeve-Fowkes and her husband Martin;

Councillor Tony Romano and his wife Patricia;

Councillor Val Oliver and her husband Ollie;

Councillor Lee-Anne Smith;

Councillor Bart Houwen and his wife Wilhelmina ;

Councillor Yaz Mubarakai and his wife Geri;

Councillor Stephen Pratt and his partner Elena;

Councillor Steven Portelli and his partner Sharon;

My wife Patricia and our granddaughter Caitlin Evans;

Mr Stephen Cain, Chief Executive Officer;

Members of the City's Executive and other staff;

Ms Cassandra Cooper, Cultural Development Coordinator, City of Cockburn;

Mr Alex Campbell, President, Historical Society of Cockburn and his wife Millie;

Life Members and Members of the Historical Society of Cockburn;

Mr Bill Wallington, President Cockburn Community & Cultural Council and his wife Maxine;

Mrs Mollie Manning & other members of the Manning Family;

Mrs Athalie Isted and other members of the Isted family;

Distinguished members of the Cockburn community;

Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls.

Before moving to the tree planting ceremony in honour of Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee I want to bring to everyone's attention the fact that in the rose bed across from us an English Oak tree stands proudly in the grounds of the Azelia Ley Hmoestead.

An English Oak tree was planted in honour of the Coronation of King George VI in 1937 in the then garden area of the City's Old Council Chambers on the corner of Rockingham and Forrest Roads.

Councillor Alfred (Fred) Isted, Fremantle and Districts Roads Board, a professional gardener by occupation had acquired the English Oak tree and on 7 May 1937 his granddaughter Dorothy Gibson planted the tree in a ceremony attended by dignitaries from near and far.

Fred Isted went on to become the longest serving member of the then Fremantle & Districts Roads Board – a period of 21 years. He also served as Chairman.

Mrs Athalie Isted and other members of her family are here today.

The tree remained in that location until 1994 when a decision was made to re-locate it to the grounds of Manning Park.

The reason for its re-location was that the then Main Roads Department had resumed the location from the City of Cockburn for inclusion in the Roe Highway Reserve and it was feared that the English Oak tree would be bulldozed along with the building itself.

A secondary reason was that the tree had started to get established and there were fears that it may threaten the building foundations themselves. This was confirmed when officers arrived on site to do some work in the cellar area and mention was made of that very point.

Bill Wallington recalls approaches being made to him by members of the Historical Society of Cockburn at the time concerned that the tree could be damaged or required to be moved if the roots posed a threat to the building foundations.

Bill Wallington also remembers that acorns were on the tree at that time.

Given the historical aspect of the tree it was agreed to re-locate the tree as a matter of urgency.

A re-planting ceremony was held at the site at the rear of the Azelia Ley Homestead Museum. The Isted family were in attendance to witness the event.

Everyone crossed their fingers hoping that the tree would survive – however that was not to be the case – the tree died in 1993.

However there is an interesting twist to the story. The late Mr Ray Higgs, former President of the Historical Society of Cockburn and its inaugural life member (his wife Peggy, also a life member of the HSC is here today) had travelled to Donnybrook to collect firewood for his Perth based business and decided to stop at the English Oak tree alongside the railway station and pick up a few acorns.

Ironically Peggy had been born in Donnybrook and her family had lived just down the road in Wilgan.

On his return home Ray and Peggy planted the acorns into pots and it wasn't long before they struck – however several died and Peggy realizing her lack of green finger skills decided to pass one of the pots on to Dorothy Willis, the wife of the Azelia Ley Homestead Museum's inaugural curator, Harry Willis.

Dorothy Willis is also here with us today.

With nurturing the Oak tree reached a size where Dorothy thought it was ready to be planted out to the location we see today.

There was no pomp and ceremony, the young tree was planted by Harry Willis in 1994 and left to send it roots down to water.

It wasn't until the last eighteen months that that small tree suddenly decided to grow – giving everyone at the HSC several tormenting times when it seemed it would follow the same fate as the earlier oak.

It now appears that that acorn from the Donnybrook English Oak tree has gained further heritage significance.

The English Oak tree planted at Donnybrook in 1890 (or perhaps earlier) has formally been recognized as the largest tree of its type in Australia and is on the National Register of Big Trees.

There is information on the Donnybrook oak tree in the Museum if you wish to peruse it.

Turning our attention to today's tree planting ceremony in recognition of the diamond jubilee celebration of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's accession to the throne 60 years ago I am very pleased with the outcome of my research for today's event.

I believe it has brought alive events from our past and linked them from a historic and heritage perspective to today's occasion.

Peggy Higgs said to me recently that if both trees grow to maturity it is conceivable that their crowns will meet in about one hundred years from now.

Now that would be a sight to behold?

There is no doubt that the Royal Visit by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh to Australia last year for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting captured the Australian community's imagination just as it has on each and every occasion there has been a member of the Royal Family visit.

Upon her Coronation in 1953 Queen Elizabeth II made the following statement:

"Throughout all my life and with all my heart I shall strive to be worthy of your trust."

This statement personifies the way her Majesty has fulfilled the role and responsibility as Head of the Commonwealth and I am indeed honoured to conduct this ceremony in recognition of Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee.

As I move forward to plant the English Oak Tree to acknowledge Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee and the respect that she is held in Australia and throughout the world I ask that you gather around the location.

Ladies and gentlemen, girls and boys I thank you for being here today to share in the occasion of planting this English Oak Tree to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

May Her Majesty continue to reign for many years to come and may this tree grow and reach out to connect with the Coronation Oak planted in honour of her Father's Coronation in 1937.

Thank you.