

## THE AMERICAN WAR CEMETERY

### Contract Between Trustees of The Ipswich Cemetery & the U.S.A.

On 7 April 1942 the Chairman of the Ipswich Cemetery Trustees called the trustees together to consider a request from the USA Headquarters Base Section No. 3 for a reservation of 4 acres of land in the Extension Reserve for the interment of deceased members of the U.S.A.F.I.A.

The trustees approved the request and at a meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1942 considered a further request from the U.S.A.F.I.A. Headquarters Base No. 3 to increase the area from four acres to six and a half acres. This requested was also approved.



### Name for the Cemetery

On 9<sup>th</sup> July 1962 the Chairmen of the Ipswich Cemetery Trustees brought forward the matter of a name for the Extension Reserve and suggested it might be called the 'Ipswich Garden Cemetery'.

### Statistics

**Sex:** Females = 8, Males = 1395

**Religion:** Catholic = 295, Greek Orthodox = 1, Hebrew = 25, High Episcopalian = 1, Latter Day Saints = 1, Mohammedan = 1, No Preference = 3, Not State = 1, NRD = 1, NRP = 5, Protestant = 722, RNI = 29, Roman Catholic = 2, Unknown = 316.

### Newspaper Articles

#### Work at U.S. Cemetery should finish today. *The Queensland Times*, 20 July 1947.

Provided the weather remains fine, the exhumation of 1397 American war dead at the U.S. Cemetery, Ipswich will be completed today.

Working at the cemetery, which is shielded from public view by sheets of canvas, 200 Australians and members of the American Graves Registration Services should have completed the work two days ago, but were hampered by the wet weather. The Australians are being paid about £2/10/ a day.

The disinterred bodies are being taken to Redbank, where they are embalmed and placed in steel caskets, at a cost of about £200 each.

After a State funeral for one American soldier in Brisbane on Monday, the bodies will be taken, at U.S. Government expense, to America on the ship, Goucher Victory. The casket containing the body of the one soldier will be carried by a gun carriage from Redbank to King George Square. Wreaths will be laid by Federal and State Government representatives, the Brisbane City Council, and the public, in a ceremony at which the three Australian services will be represented.

The ceremony will take place in the square before the gun carriage. As the casket is passed to the Americans and carried aboard the Goucher Victory, an Australian guard of honour will fire a salute and sound the "Last Post".

**An officer at the cemetery yesterday said that the flagpole and gates at the entrance would be taken away, and all signs that the site was a cemetery would be removed.**

The dead, with the exception of two general prisoners, will be reburied with honours in America.

When the task of the Graves Registration Service is completed here, the unit will move to Saipan and Guam where other bodies will be exhumed. The unit will find the extra labour it needs at these places.

The Ipswich Cemetery Trust is at present formulating plans to establish a memorial to the personnel buried in Ipswich.

### **14 July, 1971**

Ipswich City Council workmen late last year began making a park on the site of the American servicemen's cemetery, in Cemetery Road.

Over two dozen trees and shrubs were planted in the programme and it is envisaged that seats, playground equipment and a fountain will later be included.

The park at present has no name.

### **Coffins are uncovered. Wednesday, 5 November 1986. The Queensland Times.**

Sewerage pipe installation has led to the discovery of a little history at Ripley with the unusual find of empty coffins.

The progressive sewerage project marks the end of an era for the small Moreton Shire township. But the coffins, found by workers working on sewerage connections in Clark St, will remain in the ground untouched. Water and sewerage engineer Andrew Underwood said that after the find was made last week he did some quick research.

The occupants of the coffins were flown home to the United States after the war and the coffins buried in places where it was thought there would never be residential development.

"It wasn't a cemetery, it was just a dumping ground for the boxes," Mr Underwood said. "We only uncovered the edge of it and then just put them back in the same spot."

### **Ipswich: The Little America. The Queensland Times, Monday, May 4 1992**

Fifty years ago, Ipswich became a "Little America". As the Japanese threat to Australia intensified in World War 2, American troops were posted here in large numbers, stationed near Redbank and at Amberley air base.

The Yank invasion was a culture shock for both the locals and the Americans themselves.

The locals seem to have been surprised that the Yanks were so well-provided with ready money and scarce luxuries – The Queensland Times said that local children even had to be stopped from begging pennies and chocolates from the generous troops.

But the Yanks were also young, lonely and homesick. They looked to Ipswich girls for company and to local families as substitutes for Mom and Pop back home.

US commanders were ordered to discourage their troops from marrying Australian girls while the war was in progress. An engagement was acceptable, but the stern military order warned, "We do not want our soldiers to undertake the responsibilities of family life at this time. "Wartime marriages detract from efficiency".

Mrs Heather Jones of St Lucia was 14 years old when the Americans arrived in Ipswich in 1942.

She was an Ipswich Girls' Grammar School student at that time and remembers crouching in a trench for air-raid practice with a khaki handkerchief draped over her white panama hat and a rubber door stop in her mouth to prevent her teeth from breaking if a bomb dropped nearby.

"I remember the Americans as being very lonely, they were a long way from home but were very generous and always courteous," Mrs Jones said. Ipswich people welcomed the Americans with open arms and open doors and often invited lonely servicemen home for dinner.

"Dad commuted to work from Ipswich to Brisbane every day and on his way home he would stop at the pub and have a drink with his mates," Mrs Jones said. "He would see some lonely American lads in the pub and ask them home to meet the family and have dinner".

When Mrs Jones turned 15 she left school and got a job in Brisbane. This was at the same time she first recalled seeing American Negro soldiers in Ipswich. "They were very well dressed, just as lonely as the other soldiers and real gentlemen" she said. In spite of the courtesy of the Negro soldiers, Ipswich girls were warned to stay away from them. "We were also warned to carry a steel knitting needle to use as a weapon," Mrs Jones recalled.

Mrs Jones said she was not really old enough to understand the severity of the war and it always seemed a long way away from her. Mrs Jones' sister Jean Overall was 18 when the Americans arrived and also recalled her father's generosity to soldiers.

"Dad would arrive home and say 'Mother I've brought someone home to dinner,, forgetting all about the rationing,'" Mrs Overell said.

At the age of 21 Mrs Overell joined the Womens' Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and was part of Queensland's first rookie course at Sandgate. "I talked five of my friends into coming with me and when we arrived at Sandgate I remember the recruiting officer saying, 'they're arriving in squadrons', Mrs Overell said. "When we got to Brisbane we first went to the army, then the navy and finally the airforce – they were the only ones recruiting at the time"

Mrs Overell performed clerical duties and was in charge of signals during her service in the WAAF. She attained the rank of sergeant.

### **American War dead buried in Ipswich. The Queensland Times: A Place in History by Robyn Buchanan**

Manson Park in Cemetery Road is now just a small piece of local parkland. Only a flagpole and a plaque remain to identify it as the former American War Cemetery.

During World War II, many American servicemen died or were killed in Australia or the surrounding area. It was impossible for their bodies to be returned to America for burial, so special arrangements were made.

An American War Cemetery was established in Ipswich beside the General Cemetery. A contract was drawn up between the United States Government and the Ipswich Cemetery Trust which stated

that American servicemen were to be buried there “for the duration of the war plus six months afterwards for a period of ten years whichever is the lesser”.

The American Government paid three pounds ten shilling for each grave.

The first American, Private Paul Strange, was buried in Ipswich in May, 1942. Some Americans who had been buried in Lutwyche were disinterred in June and transferred to Ipswich.

The final number of burials was 1260, the last one being Paul I. Smith. Most were documented but there were a number of unknown graves and even three burials for members of the Javanese Dutch Army.

After the end of the war, more bodies were transferred from Townsville and New to Ipswich.

On November 17, 1947, the United States ship “Gauchec Victory” arrived in Australia to return the American dead to their native country.

To exhume the bodies, 190 Australian civilians, said to be mainly cane-cutters, were employed. A four metre fence of canvas was erected around the cemetery to screen it from view and the workers were instructed to observe strict decorum. “They were not to smoke or swear or hang their coats upon the crosses”.

The grim task was completed by December 20 and on December 22, a special ceremony was held in Brisbane to honor the American dead. A casket containing the body of an unknown American soldier was escorted in a solemn procession through the streets of Brisbane.

After a ceremony at the City Hall, the cortege moved through the city.

In general, the Americans had gained a special place in the affections of Australians during the war and it was a moving occasion. Flags were at half mast and bombers flew overhead in salute. Shops and government offices closed during the procession and a silent crowd estimated at 30,000 lined the streets.

At Newstead Wharf, a band played the Recessional, an AIF bugler played the Last Post and the unknown soldier was carried to the waiting ship.

Captain Harris, the American officer in charge of the War Graves Unit, wrote to the Ipswich Cemetery Trust, thanking it for ‘accomplishing a resting place for our beloved deceased prior to their repatriation to their homeland and final resting place.’

There were many suggestions in Ipswich for a permanent memorial, but eventually the flagpole and a plaque were left to mark the significance of the spot.

Today’s name, Manson Park, pays tribute to the work of a local woman Mrs Manson, who cared for the graves during the war.