

## A CALL TO ACTION – THE VIRTUAL WAR MEMORIAL & TREENET PARTNERSHIP

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Believe it or not you and me and my mates at the Virtual War Memorial have a lot in common - but we have to dig a bit to understand why.

TREENET's life's work is about all aspects of caring for and protecting trees and mine has been about working with people who made a decision to serve and protect South Australians and the nation in many different ways. For the last few years I have been supporting the Virtual War Memorial by capturing and preserving the personal experiences of all those who have served the nation in times of conflict.

Way back in 1914 on 29 August, just 25 days after Britain declared war on Germany, a group of notable citizens gathered to plant an oak tree on the edge of Creswell Gardens adjacent to Adelaide Oval. It is believed to be the first commemorative object to the Great War anywhere in the world.



Images courtesy TREENET Avenues of Honour Project 5/11/2015

It was a gesture - full of meaning: a living commemorative offering for an event where lives would inevitably be lost. However, no-one at that ceremony would have anticipated the unrivalled loss of life. Eleven million military personnel and 7 million civilians died.

The centre piece of the ceremony on 29 August 1914 was a long-living English Oak tree (*Quercus robur*). This magnificent tree stands proud today and is likely to do so long after we have all shuffled off this mortal coil. From that single gesture communities throughout this state and the nation, adopted living memorials as the major commemorative gift honouring those who served and lost their lives.

Avenues of Honour, as the nation has come to know living memorials, link what TREENET does with what we at the Virtual War Memorial do.

My call to action is to ensure that in terms of honour and remembrance, we will all have a better idea what we do and why. I have no doubt that our combined efforts and the integration of living memorials into the Virtual War Memorial, will result in more people hearing the call and responding with action.