

## Mundaring and Hills Historical Society

### Blackboy Hill Commemorative Site

As Anzac Day has passed for another year, we acknowledge the site of a training camp for approximately 32,000 men in the Shire of Mundaring.

Blackboy Hill, so named as the 4,000 acres of land on the Swan and Helena Rivers was profusely covered by "Grass Trees" or "Blackboys" as they were once known. This land was part of the original grant made to Captain James Stirling by the British Government in 1829. We believe that it was also used as a hunting and camping ground for Aborigines, who left behind large grinding stones for future use.

Blackboy Hill was the site chosen by the Government to set up a training camp for WWI. The area was stripped of the blackboys and marked out by Captain A.N. Martin and Lieutenant F.A. Beale of the Australian Engineers as a training camp for the soldiers. Rows of bell-shaped tents were erected and avenues of new trees were planted, only to be blown down in a sudden storm in 1915, leaving one tent.

With the help of busy bees and the men from the Midland Junction Railway Workshops, more permanent structures with concrete foundations and wooden huts were built. In 1919, after the war finished, the camp was used as an isolation hospital to deal with the outbreak of pneumonic influenza. When the threat of influenza was over, the site fell into disuse and the bush returned to its natural state but without the Blackboys.



Unemployed men waiting for train to National Park

During the Great Depression, the camp was used again, this time to house unemployed and destitute men. It was decided that these men could be employed and were paid one shilling per week to build roads and other structures in National Park. This did not just provide income for the men, but the morale improved considerably and they even published their own



The Elipses at Blackboy Hill

newspaper "The Blackboy Rag" which was sold for a penny. By 1935 the land was vacant again and although it was not used to train soldiers for WW11, the remaining usable huts were dismantled and re-erected elsewhere.

In 1958 the first sod was turned to create the commemorative site that we see today.

#### NEXT MEETING

Saturday 15th June

2.00 pm

The Hub of the Hills, 8 Craig Street, Mundaring

Guest Speaker to be announced

Afternoon Tea supplied for a gold coin donation

