

# Rokeby Ficifolia a big tree champion

by Davyd Reid

Two local trees have been added to the National Register of Big Trees, with a Ficifolia tree in Rokeby declared a national champion.

A delegation of Friends of Drouin's Trees had met with register co-ordinator Derek McIntosh to measure the Settlement Giant in Drouin, before a conversation about other tree species led to the measurement of the tree in Rokeby.

In his National Register of Big Trees, Derek uses a formula derived from conservation advocacy body American Forests to calculate a point figure for each tree. The formula is circumference (inches) plus height (feet) plus one quarter crown spread (feet).

With a circumference of 10.15m, height of 35m and crown of 33m, the Settlement Giant "scored a massive 541 points to qualify for the register. The branch to the side, which grew out about 60 years ago, was not included in the calculations.

"It was originally thought to be a multi-trunk tree, but that was not the case and Derek just measured around it," Keith Cook said.

"It qualified for the register and we're quite excited."

Mr Cook said Derek's interest in Drouin's Ficifolia trees led to a second visit at Rokeby.

"Derek was asking about other species and liked the Ficifolia's flowering in Drouin. I

mentioned the largest one that I knew of was in Rokeby." Mr Cook introduced Mr McIntosh to the largest Corymbia Ficifolia in the district.

The tree was planted by Keith's father in 1924 as part of a World War I memorial plantation.

Measuring with a 5.7m circumference, 10.5m height and 15m crown, Mr McIntosh said it was the largest Corymbia ficifolia he had seen. The tree registered 271 points and has been recorded on the national register as a national champion.

"My father told me there were four groups planting trees," Mr Cook said of the tree planting in 1924.

"He said there were 12 trees planted, representing 12 soldiers who died in the great war.

"He said he planted three of them, on the east side of the hall."

An excerpt from the September 16, 1924 edition of the Warragul Gazette detailed the tree planting.

"On Saturday the 6th inst memorial trees were planted in memory of fallen soldiers from Rokeby in the great war. Scarlet flowering gums were the kind chosen and substantial guards were placed round them.

"The school children helped greatly in the preparatory work for planting and with others have arranged to give the trees attention in the earlier periods of growth. When the last batch of trees is planted it is proposed to hold a memorial ceremony suitable to the occasion."



A Ficifolia tree planted in Rokeby by Keith Cook's father has been declared national champion on the National Big Tree Register.



Celebrating the inclusion of the Settlement Giant on the National Register of Big Trees are, from left Keith Cook, Judy Farmer, Tricia Jones (sitting in the tree) Peter Webb and Jeff Smythe.