



BRAVE NAMES: Nancy Penwarden checks the names of old friends and neighbours on the Omata war memorial.

Photo: TREVOR READ

Rededication honours war service

By DAVID BRUCE

THE Omata war memorial will be rededicated on Sunday — for the third time.

It was originally dedicated in the early 1920s to commemorate the 11 young men from the district who died in World War I.

Dedication day was a gala occasion and old photographs show the whole district attending.

There was ceremony after World War II when another five names of men who did not return were added to the stone. Then in August 1991 a drunk driver

missed the corner at high speed, left the road and smashed into the 70-year-old obelisk, scattering it in pieces.

Nancy Penwarden, whose bomber pilot brother was killed in 1940 and is commemorated on the memorial, remembered that day.

"I just sat there in my Mini and cried when I saw it in ruins," she recalled.

A year later, restored and rebuilt, the district's memorial was rededicated for the second time.

But Mrs Penwarden felt that her brother's friends, and the other men and one woman from the district who had served overseas and returned, also needed recognition and began a

campaign to have their names included on the memorial.

"It took a while to stimulate interest and 15 months to get it underway. For a while I thought it would never happen," she said. "But their names are there now."

Eighty-three of them — 50 from the first war and 33 from the second — are now etched on the monument.

The third rededication at 2pm on Sunday would be another gala event, Mrs Penwarden said.

"There will be the Last Post and the ode. Old servicemen will be there with their medals on and we hope to have at least four cadets as an honour guard."