Modewarre Avenue of Honour



Avenue of Honour. Source: D Rowe & W Jacobs



Avenue of Honour showing young cypresses, c.1959. Source: Anderson & Iapozzuto, Modewarre Memorial Hall & Avenue of Honour: A Local History.



Avenue of Honour showing mature cypresses, 1996. Source: Anderson & Iapozzuto, Modewarre Memorial Hall & Avenue of Honour: A Local History.



Aerial image



04/31

Location

910 Cape Otway Road MODEWARRE, SURF COAST SHIRE

Municipality

SURF COAST SHIRE

Level of significance

-

Heritage Overlay Numbers

Heritage Listing

Vic. War Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - December 1, 2008

LOCAL Significance

The Avenue of Honour, Cape Otway Road, Modewarre, has significance for its commemorative associations with locals who fought and died in the First World War, together with General Birdwood, Commander of Anzac troops and Albert Jacka, former Modewarre local who won Australia's first Victoria Cross. It also has significance as the only surviving intact Avenue of Honour in the Surf Coast Shire. Initially planted as an avenue of elms on 28 June 1918 prior to the cessation of the First World War, the avenue was replaced with the existing 32 cypress trees in the c.1940s, except for one surviving elm (tree number 33, dedicated to Albert Jacka). It is one of approximately 163 memorial tree avenues in Victoria (and one of a fewer number that survive today). The Avenue of Honour appears to be in fair condition and is predominantly intact.

The Avenue of Honour, Cape Otway Road, is historically and socially significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A.4, H.1, G.1). It has associations with local residents who fought and died in the First World and is valued by the local community as an important commemoration of their sacrifice and contribution. Initially planted as elms on 28 June 1918, these trees were replaced with cypresses in the mid 1940s. The avenue has particular associations with General Birdwood, Commander of the Anzac troops (tree number 1), Albert Jacka (tree number 33) and local soldiers. Jacka won Australia's first Victoria Cross at Gallipoli.

The Avenue of Honour of 32 cypress trees and one elm tree, Cape Otway Road, is aesthetically and scientifically (botanically) significant at a LOCAL level (AHC E.1, F.1). It demonstrates visual qualities in the creation of an important cultural landscape of mature exotic trees in Modewarre.

Overall, the Avenue of Honour, Cape Otway Road, is of LOCAL significance.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Surf Coast - Surf Coast Shire Heritage Study Stage 2B, Dr David Rowe & Wendy Jacobs, 2008;
Other Names	Cypress Avenue,
Hermes Number	125598
Property Number	

Historical Australian Themes

Towns (Farming Towns) Community Life (Commemoration)

Physical Conditions

Good

Integrity

Substantially Intact

Physical Description 1

The Avenue of Honour at Modewarre consists of an avenue of 33 mature Cypress trees on the western side of Cape Otway Road outside the Modewarre Memorial Hall and School buildings. The avenue appears to be substantially intact, with the trees being in fair condition.

Veterans Description for Public

The Modewarre Avenue of Honour, on Cape Otway Road, was planted to commemorate the First World War. It is believed that the first trees of the Modewarre Avenue of Honour were planted on June 28th 1918, prior to the cessation of the First World War on November 11th 1918 (Armistice Day). This planting followed the unveiling of a Roll of Honour in the nearby Modewarre State School on Empire Day, on May 24th 1918.

Overall, 31 trees were planted to honour each local soldier who had enlisted in the First World War, with another tree planted in dedication to General Birdwood, Commander of the Anzac troops, and a further tree planted in honour of Albert Jacka, formerly of Modewarre and winner of Australia's first Victoria Cross at Gallipoli. The avenue initially comprised a row of elms that were bound by a protective fence. Each soldier was identified by a brass plaque affixed to a peg adjacent to the trees. When the ground around the avenue was cultivated for weed control and as a fire break, the trees sent up "suckers", causing many further elms to grow instead of a single avenue.

In the mid 1940s, the original elms (then apparently with trunks 6-8 inches in diameter) were removed and replaced with cypresses, except for tree number 33 at the Moriac end of the avenue that had been dedicated to Albert Jacka.

Throughout the 20th century, Les and Alan Batson were responsible for the maintenance of the cypress trees. More substantial maintenance, including the pruning of large low limbs, was carried out as part of community working bees. In later years, Mr Lowndes (father of Laurie Lowndes) planted more cypresses along the Cape Otway Road towards Moriac. The line of trees continues beyond tree number 33 comprising the memorial avenue. The Modewarre Avenue of Honour is the only surviving intact Avenue of Honour in the Surf Coast Shire.

The Avenue of Honour was dedicated to the following soldiers (the number corresponding to the tree dedicated in their honour):

1.General Birdwood
2.Victor Hamilton Matthews (Vic.)
3.George Fishburn
4.Norman L Woods
5.John T Larcombe (Jack)
6.William A Kelly (Bill)
7.Sid J Abbott
8.H Purnell
9.R Hunt
10.Jack C Wallis
11.Clarie P Matthews
12.Sid Black
13.R L Hunter
14.A Jim Stewart
15.J W Matthews
16.Ernie E Black
17.Tom Hunter
18.Jack Deppeler
19.Stan E Matthews
20.C Cutts
21.Godfrey Deppeler
22.Allan E Matthews
23.William Dawson (Bill)
24.Jack Beckman
25.C Harris
26.G Simpson

27.E E Hendy
28.F Robinson
29.W McAdam
30.W Clark
31.C Batson
32.H Dentry
33.Albert Jacka (Bert)

The local poet, Julia Matthews, wrote the following poem entitled "In Remembrance" on the original elm avenue in 1918. An introductory paragraph reads: "The elm-tree avenue, planted at Modewarre on June 28th 1918, in remembrance of each soldier who had enlisted in the district." The poem reads:

"*We will remember, when the shadows lengthen*
Across the home fields and the dark blue range,
From this fair land, love reaches o'er the billows,
To shattered shell-torn plains.

When the sun rises, robed in warmth, and splendour,
When spring comes back, with soft and gentle rain,
Then will our hearts, with yearnings deep and tender,
Be with our boys again.

When these young trees, that loving hands have planted,
Shall wake to life, and on their robes of green,
To mourning hearts, twill breathe of Resurrection,
of life from death
Of futures, yet unseen.

To those who wait, twill whisper consolation,
For all the longings and of time the sighs,
When from the carnage, and the desolation,
Earth's springtime shall arise.

Twill speak to youth, of loftier aspirations,
To nobler thoughts, and high ideals led,
That may in coming years, in rich fruition,
Around their lives be shed.

Then let us prize these living mute memorials,
Of brave true hearts afar across the seas,
Sons of the dauntless race, that faced before them,
The battle and the breeze.

We will remember, when the guns have thundered
Their last dread notes across earth's tortured breast,
And we shall see, with glad and deep thanksgiving
The tempest sink to rest.

When white robed peace, has shed the balm of healing,
And softly soothed earth's blood, and tears away,
And nations rise, from out the night of weeping,
To purer, brighter, day."

In Australia, commemorative trees have been planted in public spaces since the late nineteenth century. Arbor Days were held regularly in most Victorian State Schools during the late 1800s and early 1900s, and numerous trees were planted in parks in Melbourne and throughout Victoria to mark the visits of important and famous people.

This tradition of commemorative planting was continued in 1901 when at the end of the Boer War trees were often planted for each soldier of the district who was killed in South Africa. These plantings, however, rarely consisted of more than two or three trees in each town.

During and after the First World War avenues of honour consisting of trees lining significant streets became a popular form of commemoration. They represented a new egalitarian approach to the commemoration of soldiers where rank was not a consideration: each tree symbolises a person.

Avenues of honour are a uniquely Australian phenomenon. Australians, and in particular Victorians, embraced the idea of planting them more enthusiastically than any other country in the world. Dating from May 1916, the Eurack Avenue of Honour is the earliest known avenue of honour to be planted in Victoria.

By the time of the Second World War avenues of honour had declined in popularity as a means of commemoration. Today it is estimated that over 300 avenues of honour have been planted in Victoria to commemorate service personnel since 1901.

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/