

BACCHUS MARSH HERITAGE STUDY.**Ref:** 166

Richard Peterson Architect & Conservation Consultant. Daniel Catrice Historian 1994.

NAME: Avenue of Honour.**PREVIOUS NAME:** Soldiers' Avenue of Honour.**CONSTRUCTION DATE:** 1918**SOURCE:** 1**CRITERIA:** Ar3; So1,2; Ae1; H4/ H3.

Commemorating

HISTORIC THEME: Townships/**CONDITION:** Very good **INTACTNESS:** Very good**THREATS:** Dutch Elm Beetle. Traffic speed. Reduced maintenance funding.**SIGNIFICANT INTACT ELEMENTS:**

STREET FURNITURE.

PLANTING FORMATION.

SIGNIFICANCE:**TYPE:** HISTORICAL. AESTHETIC.**LEVEL:** STATE.**DESIGNATION EXISTING:** Nil**RECOMMENDED CONTROL/NOMINATION:** HBR. RNE. PLANNING SCHEME.**MAP NO:** R2.05, R3.05 & U5.07**SURVEY:** RP, JS**DATE:** 19 & 24.1.94**NEGS:** 13.22 & 27, 14.4

HISTORY: The Avenue of Honour was planted on August 10, 1918 as "a memorial to the brave soldier lads who have left their homes to go and fight for their King and Country".¹ Two hundred and eighty-one Canadian Elms (*sic.*), each representing one volunteer, were planted simultaneously, and in alphabetical order, by relatives of the soldiers. The ceremony, which attracted one thousand spectators, was a community effort, with workers from the Darley Firebrick Company digging the holes and erecting tree guards, and the local branch of the Red Cross providing refreshments. Proceedings commenced with a bugle call, followed by the National Anthem. The trees were planted, speeches were delivered, the National Anthem sung, then a stirring rendition of "God Bless Our Splendid Men". Three hearty cheers for the "Boys at the Front" closed a notable occasion.²

VISUAL DESCRIPTION: A memorial avenue of about 390 mature trees, about 3.3 km in length, on the Bacchus Marsh Road, extending from Fiskin Street to about 0.5 km before the Lerderderg River road bridge. The trees vary in species and spacing (10-15m). There are lengths of pre-cast concrete diamond pavers footpath, particularly on the south side. Kerbs and channels are formed from bricks (there are three profile types), bluestone pitchers and pre-cast concrete, and pre-cast concrete spoon drains. There are a few recently planted trees at the west end on the north side.

Landscape. The approach to the town of Bacchus Marsh, along a curvaceous tree-lined avenue, is one of the most distinctive in Victoria. The trees provide a towering tunnel of cool dappled light during the summer, with glimpses of farmland and orchards on either side.

Plant Species:

<i>Ulmus procera</i>	English Elm (Dominant)
<i>Ulmus procera 'Variegata'</i>	Silver Elm
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	English Ash

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: Other significant avenues of honour in Victoria are: Ballarat (4,000 trees, planted 1920, over 23km of Elms, Oaks and Poplars); Lysterfield (silky oaks), others?? There are three other road avenues of trees in the Shire (refs: 260, 265, 357) including Myrniong Avenue of Honour, and the Pioneer Womans Avenue of Honour. This is the most significant of these.

SIGNIFICANCE: A memorial avenue of about 390 mature English Elms (*Ulmus procera*) over 3.3km in length on the Bacchus Marsh Road in its approach to the town from Melbourne, was planted on August 10, 1918. (This was well before the armistice, not signed until November 11, 1918).

¹ *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 17 August 1918.

² *Ibid.*

The Avenue is of state historical significance in demonstrating a commemorative association with a nationally important and influential phenomenon, said to signify the coming-of-age of the nation.

The Avenue is also historically significant in demonstrating the effect on a close rural community and its response and sacrifice in support of government action. It is significant also as an intact survival of a major memorial avenue, and of state aesthetic significance in the quality of its scenic beauty, as a continuous vaulted form and of the views on either side.

Finally, it is of social significance, as a landmark used by travellers to Ballarat for orientation and illustrated in representative views (postcards, tourist literature, horticultural handbooks). It is one of those landscape elements known and valued by the community as part of its sense of identity in the Garden State.

INTACTNESS: Very good. There appear to be virtually no trees missing.

CONDITIONS & THREATS: Apparently very good.

Landscape. At more than 70 years of age, the trees appear to be healthy and well formed, although there is at least one replacement with a Silver Elm. Future access to the town should ensure that the roadway is not subject to any further road widening which could harm the roots of the trees, nor should they be subject to any major pruning, except where required to maintain minimum height over the road or to correct storm damage. The trees should also be regularly checked for any signs of infestation of Dutch Elm Beetle. The trees should be retained at all cost as a tourist attraction to Bacchus Marsh and, if possible, the speed limit lowered to 70kph so that their beauty can be enjoyed!

