

Heritage Overlay No.: 023
Citation No.: 027
Place: War Memorial, Toolern Vale

Other Names of Place: First World War Memorial
Location: In Reserve, off Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road, Toolern Vale
Critical Dates: c.1920
Existing Heritage Listings: None
Recommended Level of Significance: LOCAL



Statement of Significance:

The First World War Memorial off Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road, Toolern Vale, is significant as a memorial to the local soldiers who fought and died in the First World War between 1914 and 1919. It has further significance as an unusual example of a commemorative monument, with its repousse copper upright plaque featuring Art Nouveau detailing.

The First World War Memorial off Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road is aesthetically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC. D.2, E.1). It demonstrates original design qualities that include the unusual Art Nouveau detailing and construction in the upright repousse copper plaque. Other important qualities include the flanking concrete rectilinear columns and bluestone base.

The First World War Memorial off Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road is historically and socially significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A.4, H.1, G.1). It is associated with the local soldiers who fought and died in the First World War between 1914 and 1919. It is recognised and valued by

the local community for cultural and commemorative reasons. As one of the few structures of any sort to survive the fire that consumed the hamlet in 1965, it is of additional importance to the town's history.

Overall, the First World War Memorial off Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road is of LOCAL significance.

Description:

The First World War Memorial off Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road, Toolern Vale, is located within an open grassed setting that is surrounded by trees in the local park.

The Memorial is characterised by a repousse copper Art Nouveau-inspired upright plaque with a curved top. It features typical Art Nouveau detailing including the tulip motifs and other sinuous patterns, and the names of the soldiers who engaged in the war. Flanking the plaque are two square concrete columns with simple rectangular capitals and pedestals. The columns are supported on a smooth faced bluestone pedestal which in turn rests on a coursed and tuckpointed bluestone base. The area around the base is gravelled and a new plaque has been added to the base facing the road in 2006.

History:

The war memorial movement across Australia at the end of the First World War generally commemorated not only 'the fallen', but also the living 'heroes' who had served in the Australian Defence Forces. In nearly every township across the nation 'Diggers' on pedestals, 'cenotaphs', 'Soldiers Memorial Halls', memorial arches, park pavilions, towers, and crosses appeared. By far the most popular form of memorial was the obelisk, which was cheap, practical (with ample surfaces for names and inscriptions), non-sectarian, simple, appropriate and 'lasting'.¹ The 'mounted copper plaque in the children's park'² at Toolern Vale is an uncommon, perhaps rare, form of memorial.

Memorial committees organised, raised money, and commissioned the work. Most committees raised money for memorials by appeals in the press, door-to-door canvassing, fetes, dances and anything else they could imagine. Some rural towns were assisted by 'gifts from squirely pastoralists'.³ Most memorials were opened or unveiled in the early 1920s, some a little later.

The cypress trees round the War Memorial Reserve were planted and tended by the children of the Toolern Vale School after World War One.⁴ Mary Tolhurst, a scholar in the inter-war period recalled that on the day before Anzac Day the children would be marched to the 'park where the Honour Board is situated', and after a lesson on the Boer War One and Anzac they would 'pay tribute to the fallen'.⁵

Situated in an open park, the memorial is one of the few buildings that survived the 1965 Toolern Vale fire, which consumed the school, post office, general store, Mechanics Institute

¹ Inglis, KS, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* (MUP Miegunyah, Melbourne, 1998), pp.154-179.

² Parsons M, Trigellis-Smith, Bradley H, Christey B, Cook D, Williams C, *War Memorials of Victoria: A Pictorial Record* (The Returned & Services League, Victorian Branch, Melbourne, 1994), p.105

³ Inglis, *op cit*, p.130

⁴ *Toolern Vale State School: Centenary History, 1869-1969* (Toolern Vale State School Centenary Committee, 1969), p.14

⁵ *ibid*, p.19

and fifteen of the town's eighteen houses.⁶ It is the oldest remaining public 'place' (structure) remaining in the hamlet of Toolern Vale, and an important link to its history.

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Melton Historical Themes: 'Community'

Known Comparable Example in Victoria:

Numerous First and Second World Memorials were constructed throughout Victoria and Australia from c.1920 until the late twentieth century. Other monuments within the Shire of Melton include the War Memorials off High Street, Melton. Toolern Vale's mounted art nouveau copper plaque is an uncommon form of First World War memorial.

Known Comparable Example in Melton Shire:

The Art Nouveau detailing and copper construction of this memorial at Toolern Vale is unusual for a commemorative monument of its era and in the adoption of such a style so late after its common usage in Victoria. The sinuous, curving lines of the Art Nouveau style were especially prevalent in Federation architecture in Australia after the Paris Exposition Universale of 1900. This exhibition brought a convergence of artistic and technological ideals from across Europe, including Art Nouveau design on the Esplanade des Invalides.⁷ The grand staircase of the Grand Palais by the architect, Louvet has been claimed as 'the best example of what Art Nouveau could do with the constructions of the engineers',⁸ with its curving organic forms wrapping themselves around structural columns and beams. In Victoria, Australia's most distinguished Art Nouveau detailing is found in the interior of Purrumbete Homestead near Camperdown, with its repousse copper fireplace hoods, door screens and hinges, and crafted timber detailing.⁹

Condition:

Very good

Integrity:

Intact

Recommendations:

Recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

Recommended Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls:

External Paint Controls:	<i>Yes</i>
Internal Alteration Controls:	<i>No</i>
Tree Controls:	<i>No</i>
Outbuildings and/or Fences:	<i>No</i>

⁶ Starr, J, Melton: *Plains of Promise* (Shire of Melton, c.1985), p.214

⁷ Julian, P, *The Triumph of Art Nouveau Paris Exposition 1900*, Phaidon Press Limited, London, 1974, pp.46-47.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ Rowe D, Huddle L, (Authentic Heritage Services Pty Ltd), Jacobs W, & P. Jellie, 'Purrumbete Homestead', Conservation Management Plan prepared for M. & A. Magilton, November 2001.