

# Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour



4957\_Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour\_25  
December  
2009\_HV\_019.JPG



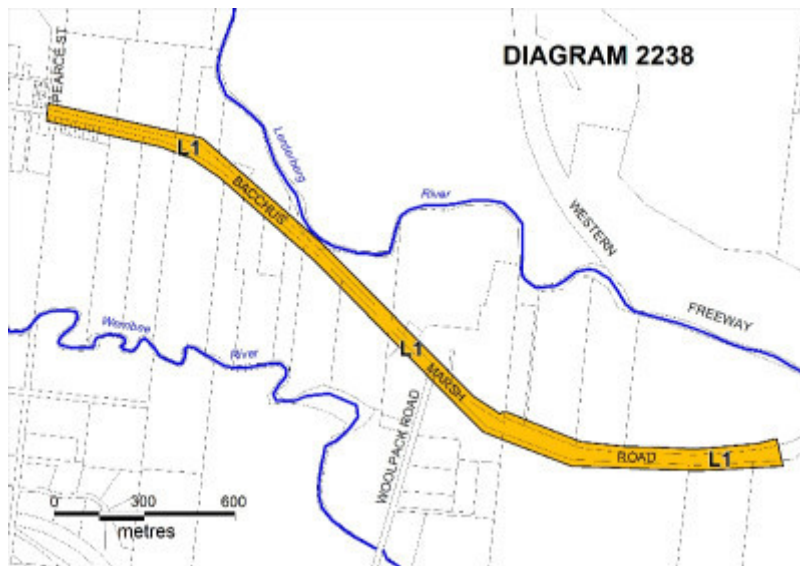
4957\_Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour\_25  
December  
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4957\_Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour\_25  
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2009\_HV\_039.JPG



4957\_Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour\_25  
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bacchus marsh aoh plan.jpg

## Location

BACCHUS MARSH ROAD BACCHUS MARSH, MOORABOOL SHIRE

## Municipality

MOORABOOL SHIRE

## Level of significance

-

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2238

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO47

## Heritage Listing

Vic. War Heritage Inventory

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

*What is significant?*

*The Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour is a combination of 281 Dutch elms (*Ulmus X hollandica*) and Huntington elms (*Ulmus X hollandica* 'Vegeta') planted in pairs approximately 20 metres apart. It is the second largest Avenue of Honour in Victoria and is largely intact.*

*The Avenue of Honour is a cultural landmark located on the eastern side of the Bacchus Marsh township and extends for approximately 2.9 km along Bacchus Marsh Road from Pearce Street in the west to the flag poles on either side of the road approximately 300 metres before the Lerderderg River. The dedicated Avenue of Honour sits within a longer avenue of elms and provides a continuous, impressive visual link between the town and the river. The Avenue of Honour is a key landscape feature of the district and is characterised by the curved road with the overarching canopies of the mature elms.*

*The Avenue of Honour is on the traditional land of the Wathaurong people.*

*The Avenue of Honour was planted in the afternoon of 10 August 1918 to commemorate locals who volunteered to serve in World War 1. The tree planting was a community effort attracting one thousand spectators, with workers from the Darley Firebrick Company and other volunteers digging the holes and erecting tree guards in readiness for the planting. After a bugle call 281 elms were simultaneously planted with each tree representing an individual volunteer soldier. In a display of egalitarianism, the name plaques associated with each tree were arranged in alphabetical order along the Avenue. This kept families together and symbolised the idea that each individual's contribution to the war effort was equally important.*

*Each tree was originally protected by timber guards with attached copper embossed name plaques mounted on a wooden block giving the soldier's name, rank and battalion details. As the guards collapsed and timber frames were removed, many of the name plaques were either lost or attached to the trees by the 1950s. In the early 1960s the Country Roads Board replanted some new trees after road realignment work and installed new green bevel-edged hardwood name plaques on white hardwood posts. In the late 1960s and 1970s missing name plaques were replaced with embossed aluminium name plaques on hardwood backing plaques which was likely*

*to be the first systematic replacement of the name plaques. By the late 1980s cast aluminium name plaques were being attached to the trees. In the late 1990s some cast bronze name plaques were mounted on the trees. In 2009 the plaques were removed for restoration and remounted in 2010. The 84 remaining original plaques are in varying condition are held in storage at the Shire Offices.*

*How is it significant?*

*The Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour is of historical, aesthetic and scientific (research and botanical) significance to the State of Victoria.*

*Why is it significant?*

*The Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour is of historic significance as a World War 1 Avenue of Honour and as one of the earliest examples of this important form of memorial planting in Victoria. The Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour is significant for its representation of the phenomenon of commemorating individual sacrifice for the World War 1 effort through the planting and maintenance of a tree in an Avenue of Honour.*

*The Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour is of historic significance for the egalitarian treatment of the individuals commemorated by each tree within the Avenue. The name plaques associated with each tree are arranged in alphabetical order along the Avenue of Honour, keeping families together and symbolising the idea that each individual's contribution to the war effort was equally important, regardless of rank.*

*The Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour is aesthetically significant for the dramatic, continuous and unbroken cathedral-like arching of the canopy, making it one of the most distinctive elm avenues in Victoria. The trees form a visually impressive colonnade effect in all seasons. The regular spacing and pairing of trees on either side of the road is a strong design element reflecting the dual purposes of commemoration and amenity enhancement. These design elements contribute to the Avenue of Honour being a cultural landmark at entrance of Bacchus Marsh.*

*The Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour is of scientific (research and botanical) significance for its potential to tell us about how Victorians dealt with the effects of war, and as an increasingly rare elm avenue due to the decimation of elms through Dutch elm disease in Europe and North America.*

*While not of State-level social significance, the Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour is of high local social significance for its relationship with the community as a living memorial to those who enlisted in World War 1. The planting of trees was seen as a symbol of hope and a tangible way for local people to become involved in commemorating soldiers who enlisted to serve their country at war.*

Construction dates	1917,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	125319
Property Number	

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## **Physical Description 1**

The Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour provides a unifying and strong visual element along the approach to the township of Bacchus Marsh from the east. The adjoining landscape changes from the old River Red gums at the Lerderderg River, to the orchards, farms, fruit stalls, shedding and finally into the residential area of the Bacchus Marsh township.

The regular spacing of the original 281 Dutch elms (*Ulmus X hollandica*) and Huntington elms (*Ulmus X hollandica* 'Vegeta') elms in the Avenue of Honour is both symbolic and an important visual element as the trees appear to be marching in pairs with adjoining canopies above the road.

The dedicated 1918 Avenue of Honour sits within a longer avenue of elms which provides a continuous visual link. At the western end between Fisk and Pearce Street the predominantly Dutch elms are probably the last trees of the former main street plantings in Bacchus Marsh dating back to the 1880s making them amongst the oldest elms in Victoria.

At the eastern approach following road works in the 1960s 36 elms were planted from the flag poles to continue the avenue to the car park adjacent to the Lederberg River. The trees have poor form and vigour unlike the rest of the avenue.

The entire avenue except for the section between Fisk and Crook Street is included in the Heritage Overlay HO47 of the Moorabool Planning Scheme. This covers the road reserve and 20 metres of the adjoining land on each side to protect the critical root zone area.

The Avenue of Honour was part of the Western Highway from planting through to the completion of the Bacchus Marsh By-pass in 1972. Management during this period was the responsibility of the Country Roads Board. In 1972 the road was again declared a main road (Bacchus Marsh Road). The Council assumed day to day management from that time and still provides management as an agent for VicRoads.

## **Veterans Description for Public**

The Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour is a combination of 281 predominantly Dutch elms (*Ulmus X hollandica*) and Huntington elms (*Ulmus X hollandica* 'Vegeta') planted in a single afternoon on 10th August 1918 as a memorial to local soldiers who enlisted in the First World War. It is located on the eastern side of the Bacchus Marsh township and extends for approximately 2.9 km along Bacchus Marsh Road from Pearce Street in the west to the flag poles on either side of the road approximately 300 metres before the Lederberg River. The dedicated Avenue of Honour sits within a longer avenue of elms which provides a continuous visual link. There are some older trees at the town end from main street plantings in the 1880s, and a younger section of trees planted in the east following road realignment work in the 1960s. The site is part of the traditional land of the Wathaurung people.

The planting ceremony on 10th August 1918, well before armistice on 11th November 1918, was a community effort attracting one thousand spectators, with workers from the Darley Firebrick Company and other volunteers digging the holes and erecting tree guards in readiness for the planting. After a bugle call relatives simultaneously planted the 281 Dutch elms with each tree representing an individual soldier.

The Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour is largely intact and comprises predominantly mature, healthy elms planted in pairs approximately 20 metres apart. Some replacement planting has occurred.

Each tree is dedicated to an individual soldier in alphabetical order to keep families together and was originally protected by timber guards with attached copper embossed name plaques mounted on a wooden block giving the soldier's name, rank and battalion details. As the guards collapsed and timber frames were removed many of the name plaques were either lost or attached to the trees by the 1950s. In the early 1960s the Country Roads Board replanted some new trees after road realignment work and installed new green bevel-edged hardwood name plaques on white hardwood posts. In the late 1960s and 1970s missing name plaques were replaced with embossed aluminium name plaques on hardwood backing plaques which was likely to be the first systematic replacement of the name plaques. By the late 1980s cast aluminium name plaques were being attached to the trees. In the late 1990s some cast bronze name plaques were mounted on the trees. In 2009 the plaques were removed for restoration and remounted in 2010. The 84 remaining original plaques are in varying condition and are held in storage at the Shire Offices.

The Avenue of Honour was part of the Western Highway from the date of planting through to the completion of the Bacchus Marsh by-pass in 1972 when it was again declared as a main road. The Avenue of Honour provides an impressive visual and cultural landmark at the eastern entrance to the town and is a key landscape feature of the district characterised by the curved road with the overarching canopies of the mature elms. The rural

landscape complements the avenue providing views of dedicated fruit and vegetable production in the east changing to light industrial and residential use at the western end with several produce sales outlets along the road.

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. The Eurack Avenue of Honour is the earliest known avenue of honour in Victoria with planting commencing in May 1916.

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.

## **Extent of Registration**

Draft Only: Not yet approved by the Heritage Council

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All the trees planted along Bacchus Marsh Road and all the memorial name plaques associated with the trees within the land marked L1 on Diagram 2238 held by the Executive Director. This includes the road reserve and 20 metres into the adjoining land on both sides in order to protect the critical root zone area.

*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/>*