
Leongatha Avenue of Honour



Leongatha World War 1



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Leon 7.jpg

Location

Yarragon Road and Wild Dog Valley Road LEONGATHA, South Gippsland Shire

Municipality

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE

Level of significance

-

Heritage Listing

Vic. War Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

/n

What is Significant?

The Leongatha Avenue of Honour, initially planted in June 1918 with later additions and replacements, in Yarragon Road and Wild Dog Valley Road, Leongatha.

Why is it Significant?

The Leongatha Avenue of Honour is of local historic, social and aesthetic significance to South Gippsland Shire.

Historically, the Avenue is important as the first of a series of World War 1 memorial avenues established throughout the Shire, and as the one which inspired the establishment of honour avenues in other towns and districts. The association with the Moss Vale Nursery which supplied the trees is also of interest. (AHC criteria -

A.4, D.2 and H.1) Socially, the Avenue is an evocative memorial to the local residents who served in World War 1.

(AHC criterion - G.1) Aesthetically, the Avenue although reduced in size remains the largest memorial avenue within the Shire. The size of the Avenue illustrates the significant effect that the First World War had upon the local community and expresses the importance placed upon creating a suitable memorial. Now mature, it greatly enhances the amenity and appearance of Yarragon Road and Wild Dog Valley

Heritage Study/Consultant	South Gippsland - South Gippsland Heritage Study, David Helms with Trevor Westmore, 2004;
Construction dates	1918,
Other Names	Memorial Avenue of Honour,
Hermes Number	125675
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

The Leongatha Avenue of Honour comprises about 200 trees, predominantly comprising elms and evergreen oaks, planted alternately on both sides of Yarragon Road between Roughead Street and Horn Street, and in Wild Dog Valley Road north of Yarragon Road. It is the largest memorial avenue in the Shire.

About 240 trees were originally planted, however, a number have now been removed or replaced with juvenile specimens, which has created gaps in the avenue. Many trees have been badly pruned, resulting in disease and other problems.

There is a cairn at the north east side of the intersection of Yarragon Road and Wild Dog Valley Road with a plaque that reads: "The Great War 1914-18. Avenue of Honour. Leongatha. The trees in Wild Dog Valley Road North of this point and in Yarragon Road, north easterly of this point to Horn Street were planted on the 22 June 1918 to commemorate the men of this district who served on active service overseas during the Great War 1914-1918. Erected by the Council of the Shire of Woorayl 1968 to replace name plaques attached to each tree at time of planting." The crest of the Australian Commonwealth Military Forces is attached to the front of the cairn.

Physical Description 2

Style

Honour Avenue

Historical Australian Themes

Thematic Context

Government and Community Institutions

Sub-Themes

Veterans Description for Public

The Leongatha Avenue of Honour was initially planted in 1918 with later additions and replacements, in Yarragon Road and Wild Dog Valley Road, Leongatha. The suggestion to establish an Avenue of Honour as a memorial for the First World War was made by Mr W Watson who was a member of the Leongatha Progress Association, after a number of alternatives had been considered. The chairman of the Tree Planting Committee was Mr R. de C. Shaw. The 'Great Southern Star' reported that an initial proposal to plant the Avenue at the Recreation Reserve was abandoned as it could have been perceived as "a parochial movement" and so "it was decided to plant the avenue outside the town boundary, where more interest would be taken in the demonstration by people in the surrounding districts".

The planting of the Leongatha Memorial Avenue of Honour commenced on June 22nd 1918, following a ceremony led by the Hon. JE Mackey MLA, who was then Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. Mr Mackey planted the first tree, which was dedicated to General Birdwood, a predecessor of General Monash, and a total of about 250 trees were eventually planted by over 200 people from the local community who attended on that day. Mr Mackey made a stirring address and concluded that "As long as people used the roads leading to Leongatha, the avenue of trees would remind them of the boys who had done so much for those at home". He added that "When each man returned he could say this is 'my' tree, and would feel proud that the people had remembered them when they were away".

Originally, the Avenue was in two parts and included the main section along Yarragon Road from the Butter Factory to the intersection with Horn Street, and a second section in Wild Dog Valley Road. On August 6th 1918, the Leongatha Progress Association undertook further planting of trees in Yarragon Road from the Butter Factory up to the intersection with Wild Dog Valley Road to link the two avenues.

The trees for the Avenue were supplied by Moss Vale nursery, while the Shire of Woorayl offered to "defray the costs of the tree guards" and the Shire Engineer Mr Bate, "pegged out the land". Commemorative plaques donated by local builder, FW Morris, were placed on each tree, which was dedicated to a local serviceman. In 1968 the plaques were removed and replaced by a single plaque on a cairn at the north east side of the intersection of Yarragon Road and Wild Dog Valley Road. The plaque on the cairn reads:

"The Great War 1914 - 1918
Avenue of Honour
Leongatha

The trees in the Wild Dog Valley Road north of this point and in the Yarragon Road, north-easterly of this point to Horn Street were planted on 22nd June 1918 to commemorate the men of the district who served on active service overseas during the Great War 1914 - 1918. Erected by the Council of the Shire of Woorayl 1966 to replace name plaques attached to each tree at the time of planting."

Today the avenue still has 186 trees comprising of the original trees planted including: English Oaks (*Quercus robur*), English Elms (*Ulmus procera*), Chestnut-leaved Oaks (*Quercus castanifolia*) and Algerian Oaks (*Quercus Canariensis*).

The Leongatha Avenue of Honour was the second and largest to be established in the former Shire of Woorayl (the avenue at Berry's Creek was planted on the previous day) and inspired the planting of similar memorial avenues at Koorooman, Meeniyah, Nerrena and Wooreen.

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/>