
Newstead Avenue of Honour



ND81 - Shire of Mount Alexander: Heritage Study of the former Shire of Newstead, 2003

Location

Pyrenees Highway NEWSTEAD, Mount Alexander Shire

Municipality

MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE

Level of significance

-

Heritage Listing

Vic. War Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - October 10, 2003

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The Avenue of Honour, Pyrenees Highway, Newstead, is aesthetically significant at a LOCAL level. The span of approximately 70 elm and plane trees (including a few original and young cut-leaf plane and elm trees forms an important visual quality and a significant urban focus in this area of the Newstead township. After the First World War, the planting of memorial avenues of honour became a state-wide trend.

The Avenue of Honour, Pyrenees Highway, Newstead, is historically significant at a LOCAL level. It is associated with the men and women who fought in the First World War, having originally been planted in 1919, with

replacement plantings occurring in 1995.

The Avenue of Honour, Pyrenees Highway, Newstead, is socially significant at a LOCAL level. It is recognised and highly valued by the Newstead community for cultural, social and commemorative reasons in relation to those men and women who fought in the First World War.

Overall, the Avenue of Honour, Pyrenees Highway, Newstead, is of LOCAL significance.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Mount Alexander - Shire of Mount Alexander: Heritage Study of the former Shire of Newstead, Wendy Jacobs, Phil Taylor, Vicki Johnson, and Robyn Ballinger, 2003;
Other Names	Pyrenees Highway, Newstead,
Hermes Number	125732
Property Number	

Historical Australian Themes

Thematic Context - 10. Community Life

Physical Conditions

Fair

Integrity

Substantially Intact

Physical Description 1

This heritage place comprises the Avenue of Honour along the Pyrenees Highway, west of Newstead.

The Avenue of Honour on both sides of the Pyrenees Highway, Newstead, is comprised of two rows of about 70 trees. It is approximately 800 metres in length and includes a few original plane trees, as well as elms and young cut-leaf plane trees, which were planted over the years to replace original trees that had died or been removed. A number of trees were replaced with English elms (*Ulmus prosera*) in 2003. The original guards and name plates have been removed.

Veterans Description for Public

The Newstead Avenue of Honour, along the Pyrenees Highway, was planted in 1919 to commemorate the First World War. During the First World War approximately 180 men enlisted from the Shire of Newstead and of these thirty-four died on active service. As early as the Gallipoli campaign in 1915, Cr Edward Rowe proposed that Council assist with an honour roll to commemorate these men. While an honour roll eventually was erected in the Mechanics' Institute, the immediate post-war community felt that something was needed to commemorate the sacrifice. Rowe, President of the Welcome Home Committee, chaired a public meeting at Newstead on June 20th 1919 that decided unanimously to co-operate with the Newstead branch of the Australian Women's National

(AWNLI) and establish 'an Avenue of Honour to perpetuate the memory of Our Boys'.

Subscriptions were generous, but the site's location proved controversial. Although a majority at the June meeting favoured the Strangways Road at Newstead, the Shire judged this unacceptable because the site was on the Loddon River's flood plain. After several deputations to Council, and amidst joyful welcomes home for returning soldiers and the Peace Celebrations, the Shire put three sites to the ratepayers' vote on July 24th: Strangways Road, Castlemaine Road, and Maryborough (Joyce's Creek) Road. The ratepayers selected the latter site (now known as the Pyrenees Highway) and, at a well-attended working bee on 23 August, volunteers planted fifty-three oriental plane trees and made timber guards for each. Another working bee shortly afterwards planted thirty trees and affixed name plates (donated by the AWNLI branch) to the guards.

Brigadier General Charles Brand (1873-1961), Military Commandant of Victoria, 1919-21, who had commanded the AIF's 3rd Brigade on Gallipoli and the 4th Brigade in France, officially opened the avenue on September 18th 1919. The date was 'a memorable one', reported the *Newstead Echo*, in the September 24th issue, because it was 'without parallel in the long line of various events...in the township.' Other dignitaries present included D. McLeod, MLA, Shire President Cr Coutts, Edward Rowe, of the Welcome Home Committee, and returned soldiers in uniform. Among a large 'enthusiastic' crowd were relatives and friends of the soldiers being commemorated.

In his speech, McLeod explained that the avenue 'would be a standing memorial in the future as to what our boys had done, the magnitude of the war, the courage, devotion, and determination shown by men who had never had the military training of their foe, men who had bared their breasts in the mighty struggle for right. When walking through this Avenue, let it speak of the courage and devotion shown, and when the winds sighed through the branches, let them bring back memories of those who had fallen for their cause.' The *Echo's* report also predicted that 'when well grown the Avenue will give an imposing effect to the road on the selected site. The trees, which look very healthy, are surrounded by guards, and a name plate...is affixed to each. Most of the guards were decorated by friends and relatives with patriotic flags, regimental colours, and in the case of fallen soldiers, with suitable emblems of mourning.'

The Avenue was planted with a mix of Dutch Elms (*Ulmus hollandica*), London Plane trees (*Platanus x acerifolia*) and White Poplars (*Populus alba*). In time, many trees died and were replaced by elms. Seventy-six years later, on September 17th 1995, members of the Newstead community held another working bee to replace nine trees with cut-leaf planes donated by Mount Alexander Shire Council. Within five years, however, seven of these trees had also died or been removed.

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/>