
Cheltenham Avenue of Honour

Location

CHELTENHAM, BAYSIDE CITY

Municipality

BAYSIDE CITY

Level of significance

-

Heritage Listing

Vic. War Heritage Inventory

Hermes Number 126571

Property Number

Physical Description 1

Avenue. 'Gums and Palm Trees'

Historical Australian Themes

Remembering the fallen

Veterans Description for Public

The Cheltenham Avenue of Honour was planted on July 28th 1917 to commemorate those who served in the First World War. The idea for the avenue was initiated by G. Livesley of the Cheltenham Progress Association in June 1917. The original plan was to plant 120 trees from Centre Dandenong Road down Point Nepean Road towards Mentone. It was also decided the Avenue would feature native trees with a timber guard and brass plate with the name of the volunteer. Money for the Avenue was raised through public subscription with each tree costing ten shillings and six pence.

The fundraising was successful receiving enough money for 142 trees. It was then debated at length in what order the trees would be planted, some suggested it should start with those who enlisted first. Following that reasoning, the first tree to be planted at the ceremony was dedicated to A. Fisher. However, a week later it was discovered that J. Warburton was in fact the first district serviceman to enlist.

At the opening ceremony of the Avenue "God Save the King" was played and then followed by C. H. Fairbank, the president of the Progress Association introducing O.R. Snowball, a local politician and member of the Legislative Assembly of the Victorian Parliament. Fairbank praised the avenue of honour and also urged parents to allow their sons to enlist.

Snowball then planted the first tree on the corner of Centre Dandenong and Point Nepean roads attaching the name of A. Fisher to the tree guard. Six weeks after the ceremony Livesley wrote to the *Moorabbin News* to report that 199 trees had been planted, including nine trees without name plates to leave room for future volunteers.

Since 1917, Point Nepean Road has been reconstructed several times, transforming from a two lane road to an eight lane highway. Today there is no physical evidence that the Avenue existed. However the names of the men who served are recorded on the two memorial broken columns in the memorial garden behind the RSL Club Rooms in Centre Dandenong 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 to be planted in Victoria and dates from 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.

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/>