
Hamilton Avenue of Honour

Location

Clarke Street HAMILTON, SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

Municipality

SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

Level of significance

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Heritage Listing

Vic. War Heritage Inventory

Hermes Number 126852

Property Number

Physical Description 1

Avenue.

Historical Australian Themes

Remembering the fallen

Physical Conditions

Good condition and sign posted.

Usage/Former Usage

Commemoration

Veterans Description for Public

The Hamilton Avenue of Honour, on Clarke Street, was planted by the children of the Elementary School on Arbour Day 1917. The idea for this memorial avenue was first presented to the Elementary School Committee by Mr Hughan, the Curator of the Hamilton Gardens. The suggestion was unanimously approved, and after the Borough Council had given its approval to both the site along the banks of the Grange Burn, and to the use of the name 'Anzac Avenue', planning proceeded. At this time, there were already 25 former pupils of the school who had lost their lives serving their country during the First World War. Twenty-six of Hamilton's men came from Clarke Street, this represented the highest enlisted/resident ratio in the Commonwealth.

The School Committee invited the Mayoress, the wife of the President of the Shire of Dundas and representatives of the bereaved relatives to participate in the Arbour day ceremony, and the Mayor and members of the Ministers' Association and the Roman Catholic Church to deliver addresses. Anzac Avenue was proposed to follow the Grange Burn from Skene Street to the railway bridge. Mr Hughan supervised on the first occasion when the nucleus of the avenue was formed by the planting of 36 trees. In 1918 the number was increased to 93. During the summer months, the boys from the School watered the trees, and the Borough of Hamilton minutes of February, 1921 record that they had carried 600 buckets of water to Anzac Avenue, for which they received a vote of thanks from the Councillors. During the next few years many of the trees in the avenue had to be replaced, as the original plane trees were not suited to the heavy soil.

Over the years the surviving trees grew to maturity and formed the avenue envisaged by Mr Hughan. Gradually, the significance of the trees was forgotten, so that by the latter part of the century, very few residents in Hamilton were aware of their existence. Members of the Hamilton History Centre, while researching war memorials in the town, stumbled upon information about the Avenue in Mr Sidney Officer's unpublished manuscript *Hamilton Spectator 1910-1918: "A Record of the Part it Played in the Great War with Honour Roll."* Immediate steps were taken to determine if the plans of the Avenue survived, and if anything remained of the Avenue trees.

Trees were found to be growing in two rows, following along the banks of the Grange Burn, from the southern end of Kennedy street westwards towards Portland Road. Most of the trees are barely discernible as the vicinity is overgrown with elm tree suckers and blackberries. The future of Anzac Avenue is uncertain. The area is now one of the few remaining habitats for the endangered Eastern Barred Bandicoot, and a restoration of the avenue will destroy the vegetation necessary for the preservation of this scarce marsupial.

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. Dating from May 1916, the Eurack Avenue of Honour is the earliest known avenue of honour that was planted in Victoria.

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/>