

Heritage Listing

Golden Plains Shire

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

The Smythesdale General Cemetery is situated beside the Glenelg Highway, 2.5km south of the township of Smythesdale. The first burial was recorded in 1859, with the cemetery officially gazetted on 7 September 1863. The cemetery was originally located within the Borough of Browns and Scarsdale, however a decline in population coupled with the declining productivity of the nearby mines saw the borough unite with the Grenville Shire in 1915.

The denominational and non-Christian sections of the cemetery were formally laid out in 1861 and are configured within the interior and around the periphery of a heart shape, with a central avenue of *Ulmus procera* leading from the entrance gateway. It is rare for non-Christian sections to be included within the grounds. The Smythesdale Cemetery is one of the most elaborate in the Golden Plains Shire for its planning and plantings. It contains the graves of miners from the nearby Smythesdale diggings and local pioneering families. The sexton's cottage has been removed but is remembered by the annual flowering of bulbs in the area.

How is it significant?

The Smythesdale General Cemetery is of historical, social and architectural (aesthetic) significance to the Golden Plains Shire.

Why is it significant?

The Smythesdale General Cemetery is of historical significance as an enduring record of those who have lived and died in the community, as a reflection of the passing phases, ways of life and death, particular events, and as documentary evidence of the district's prosperity and hardships.

The Smythesdale General Cemetery is of social significance for reflecting the customs and tastes of the community, for reflecting different religious values, and for reflecting different economic and social status. It is also an important place for passive recreation.

The Smythesdale General Cemetery is of architectural (aesthetic) significance for its range of tombstones, memorials, cast and wrought iron fences and iconography reflecting the aesthetics of different periods and groups within the community. The cemetery also has significance for its planning and plantings, formally laid out in 1861 and configured within and around the periphery of a heart shape, with a central path leading from the entrance gateway.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Golden Plains - Golden Plains Shire Heritage Study Phase 2, Heritage Matters P/L, 2009;
Hermes Number	23717
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

The cemetery comprises 20 acres [8 ha] and is divided into denominational and non-Christian areas, with clusters of graves distributed within an unusual heart shaped configuration. Some of the graves have been delineated by elaborate wrought or cast iron fences, while others such as the gravestones within the Chinese section remain open. The most elaborate cast iron fence is around the Martin Family grave. A central pathway runs from the entrance through the heart to the east of the allotment. A small corrugated iron maintenance hut with a pitched corrugated iron roof is located directly to the south of the entrance gate off the Glenelg Highway. Access to the cemetery is gained through a tree lined drive which forms an avenue of *Ulmus procera* which are approximately 30-50 years old. Surviving plantings within the cemetery include *Quercus petraea* (Sessile Oak), *Cedrus deodara* f. *glauca* (Blue Atlas Cedar), *Ulmus procera* (English Elm), *Pinus radiata* (Monterey Pine) and a further mixture of individual Oaks, Cyprus and Pines. A row of *Pinus radiata* (Monterey Pine) exists on the western boundary. A self-guided interpretation program of twelve signs installed during 2006 by the Smythesdale Cemetery Trust are located at various points throughout the site. These signs provide an historical background of the individuals and families buried throughout the cemetery. Bulbs flower annually in the area where the sexton's cottage once stood. Several avenues of new *Quercus palustris* have been planted. Some indigenous vegetation including various Eucalyptus and *Themeda triandra* survive on the site. The traditional planting scheme appears to continue outside the cemetery in the roadside verge.

Historical Australian Themes

The Australian Heritage Commission devised the Australian Historic Themes in 2001. The following themes have influenced the historical development of the Smythesdale General Cemetery.

9 Marking The Phases of Life

9.7 Dying

9.7.1 Dealing with human remains

9.7.2 Mourning the dead

9.7.3 Remembering the dead

Integrity

The Smythesdale Cemetery is in good condition and retains a high degree of integrity.

Physical Description 2

Extent of Registration: To the extent of the Smythesdale Cemetery being Allot. 12 Sec. 1 PARISH OF SCARSDALE, including grave sites, grave stones and the interior plantings of *Quercus petraea* (Sessile Oak), *Cedrus deodara* f. *glauca* (Blue Atlas Cedar), *Ulmus procera* (English Elm), *Pinus radiata* (Monterey Pine) and a further mixture of individual Oaks, Cyprus and Pines. And the perimeter row of *Pinus radiata* (Monterey Pine) on the western boundary.

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/>