

Victoria's Avenues of Honour

Reconnecting with our past 2013-2018



Secondary School Teachers Manual. Downloadable PDF documents full of a range of activities for different ages and levels.

Activities for Secondary School Students.

As we approach the centenary of the First World War, communities Australia-wide are searching for ways in which to remember and commemorate those who experienced the devastation of that terrible conflict. The National Trust of Australia (Vic) has begun an initiative to assist Victorian communities identify and appreciate the history of their memorial Avenues of Honour. This manual has been developed to assist students gain a better understanding of their local history and heritage.

Note: These activities have been designed so that a range of class levels will be able to participate in this project. It is up to the teacher to choose what activities will be appropriate for their class. Some activities between primary and secondary levels do overlap, again it is up to the teacher to decide how to present the activities, and extend them if necessary.

It is also important to bear in mind that no two Avenues of Honour are the same, nor are they in the same condition. Many are in poor health and incomplete, or completely lost. These activities have been designed so that each school can apply their own circumstances to each activity. They are not designed to apply to everyone.

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Essay Questions.

These questions have been designed to make your class think critically about the role and place of Avenues of Honour in our society.

1. How does our local Avenue of Honour inform war remembrance in our community?
2. What do war memorials contribute to a modern Australia?
3. Why are 'green memorials' like an Avenue of Honour important features of our community landscape? (Think biodiversity, ecologically (climate change), aesthetically and historically.)
4. What do Avenues of Honour tell us about the Australian experience of war?
5. What messages or values do you believe Avenues of Honour aim to convey? How successfully do you think they do this?

Research Tasks.

Using Trove, what can your class discover about your local Avenue of Honour? Below are some questions that you may like to put to them.

1. When was the Avenue of Honour first planted?
2. Who planted the trees?
3. How many trees were originally planted?
4. What species of trees were planted?
5. Did the Avenue of Honour ever come under threat? (eg: Roadworks?)
6. Are there any old photos of the Avenue of Honour?

Using Mapping our Anzacs what can your class discover about the soldiers commemorated in the Avenue of Honour? (You could do the research as a class or get each class member to pick a soldier to research.)

Can you find out information on these soldiers including

1. When did they enlist?
2. How old were they when they enlisted?
3. What did they look like?
4. Where did they serve?
5. How old they were?
6. Did they survive the war?
7. Were they wounded?
8. Did they get sick?
9. Were they ever disciplined for their behaviour?

Further research on soldiers can be done by looking at websites such as; Trove, Red Cross wounded and missing files, Australian War Memorial and the National Library of Australia.

Make a Video.

Ask your class to create a short video about a specific aspect of your local Avenue of Honour. The purpose of this activity is for class members to raise awareness of Avenues of Honour in our community. A video could be played at a community event, school assembly or at a local Anzac Day ceremony. These can also be uploaded to the National Trust Avenue of Honour Awareness Website to share with others.

Some ideas for a video include.

1. Individual Soldier's stories.
2. Historic overview of the Avenue of Honour.
3. Vox pop interviews with local citizens about what the local Avenue of Honour means to them.
4. Record your schools oral history interviews concerning the local Avenue of Honour.
5. A multimedia video with photos, newspaper cuttings, ect on the history of the Avenue of Honour.

Or, ask your class to come up with their own video idea!

Create a Blogsite.

Chart your communities Avenue of Honour Project through the National Trusts Avenue of Honour Awareness website! Upload details about your research, photos, stories you have found, as well as information about community days, planting events, ect!

Write a Newspaper Article.

Individually or as a class, write an article for your local newspaper on why your local Avenue of Honour is important to the community, and why it should be remembered into the future. Alternatively, come up with your own topic to construct a newspaper article around that is relevant to your community's Avenue of Honour.

Remembrance through Art.

Create a piece of Art to commemorate your local Avenue of Honour. This could be a painting, sculpture, print, or something else!

Writing Tasks.

Choose one of these writing tasks to complete with your class. These may be later presented at a community event or even at a school assembly for Anzac Day!

1. Using Mapping our Anzacs and Trove, ask each member of your class to find a local soldier to write a story about. Using the information provided in their service record, newspaper reports and any other documents relating to their soldier they can find, ask them to write a short story on this soldier's war experience.
2. Ask your class to write a short story on your local Avenue of Honour. This can be about its planting, any challenges the Avenue may have faced, a family story about the Avenue, or on a topic of their choosing relating to the local Avenue of Honour's history.
3. Poetry. Ask your class to construct a poem about the local Avenue of Honour.

Oral History Interviews.

Oral history interviews are a fantastic way for students to gain a better understanding of their local community's past, as well as creating a unique historical record that can be preserved for future generations. Using the set of questions below (or make up your own), organise for your students to record the stories and personal memories about the local Avenue of Honour from members of the community.

If your community is holding an Avenue of Honour Awareness Day, this might be a great place to conduct the interviews! Otherwise, ask the local RSL or historical society if they can advertise that you are looking for people to interview!

When you are ready to conduct the interviews, give each student a printed out page of interview questions. Ask them to write down everything the person they are interviewing them says. Alternatively, if your school has a video camera, you may ask the students to record the person they are interviewing while they read out the questions.

These records have the capacity to be made into a book, or a video presentation to display for the community.

Oral History Interview Questions.

1. What does the local Avenue of Honour mean to you?
2. What do you know about the Avenue of Honour's history?
3. Do you have a relative that is commemorated on the Avenue of Honour? Can you tell us about them?
4. Can you remember any of the other soldiers who are commemorated on our local Avenue of Honour? Can you tell us about them?
5. Why do you think the Avenue of Honour is important to our community?
6. Do you have any personal stories about the Avenue of Honour?
7. How has the Avenue of Honour been important to your life?
8. Can you ever remember the Avenue being under threat? How did this make you feel?
9. Is there anything you would like to tell the future residents of Bacchus Marsh one hundred years from now about our local Avenue of Honour?
10. Is there anything else about the Avenue of Honour that you would like to record?

Community Event Flyer.

If your school plans on holding an Avenue of Honour Awareness day for the community, ask your class to design their own posters and flyers advertising the day to be distributed locally. Make sure they have:-

1. A title
2. Time and Date of the event
3. Where will the event be held
4. Information of what the day is about
5. A note to say that everyone is welcome to join
6. A note of what kind of activities, displays, talks and speeches will occur on the day
7. Contact Details of the Event organisers
8. Any other information that might need to be added to advertise your particular event (eg: Please loan us any information, pictures, letters that you may have for the Avenue of Honour Awareness Day.)

Classroom Debate.

Using the opinion piece provided, conduct a class debate on the topic

'Tradition vs Progress: Should the Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour been saved?'

A matter of honour

The Age, Melbourne. May 28, 2010



Heather Mui, Janie Garner, Gwen Rasdell, John Murphy, Heather Shugg, Katrina Bradfield and Belinda Dellios are opposing a roundabout on the Avenue of Honour in Bacchus Marsh. *Photo: Paul Rovere*

Many Bacchus Marsh residents are up in arms because of plans to build a roundabout through the middle of the town's historic Avenue of Honour. Carolyn Webb reports.

ON AUGUST 10, 1918, more than 1000 people - most of the then population of Bacchus Marsh - gathered at the corner of the Melbourne road and Woolpack Road to plant an avenue of trees to honour the town's men and women who had gone off to serve in the Great War.

A bugle sounded, and within half an hour 281 elm saplings stood tall along two miles either side of the eastern approach road to town. Each tree was dedicated to a soldier:



The opening of the Avenue of Honour in Bacchus Marsh in 1918.

"Cpl S. Witham, 5th Battalion, Killed in Action 19-7-16", was one.

The local *Express* newspaper recorded the event: "Tears were hung on every tree - tears of joy for the lad who had returned, of pride and anxiety for those still in the ranks, and of sorrow for the one who had paid the supreme sacrifice ..."

Although just a small farming town, the Bacchus Marsh district sent more than 400 men and women to World War I and the avenue was a tangible act of love for absent sons and daughters, husbands, brothers and friends.

Even today, residents feel a powerful connection with it. Heather Shugg's late father, John Chambers, has a tree, as do three of his brothers: one of them, Harold Chambers, 21, died in the landing at Gallipoli.

Shugg, 84, says despite living in Bacchus Marsh all her life, the avenue of tall trees still moves her. "Every time I drive along it, whether once a week or three times, you think, isn't the avenue beautiful?"

Gwen Rasdell's uncle, Alfred Slack, also has a tree - he was killed when he was just 22. Rasdell's grandmother, Margaret Slack, lived on the corner of the avenue and Woolpack Road and it was outside her house in 1918 that the tree planters gathered to hear speeches and have afternoon tea.

It's no wonder, then, that Allan Comrie, a present-day Bacchus Marsh resident and Moorabool Shire councillor, describes as "emotive" the current debate over VicRoads' \$20 million plan to build a north-south truck route from the Western Highway to a new roundabout in the middle of the avenue, connecting to the same Woolpack Road intersection where locals met before the 1918 planting.

Eight trees out of the existing 312 would be felled and new elms planted around the roundabout, complete with commemorative plaques from the old elms.

The issue has divided Bacchus Marsh. The National Trust, the local historical society and concerned residents say the proposal will ruin the graceful sweep of the avenue. At present, you turn off the Western Highway from Melbourne at the eastern end of the avenue at Lerderberg Creek, and drive its full length into town. But the new Woolpack Road extension moves visitors' entry point to halfway along.

The critics say it's absurd to put a roundabout and a major road that can accommodate large trucks in the middle of what they regard as a sacred place. Indeed, they plan to hold a rally in Bacchus Marsh tomorrow to voice their concerns.

This sentiment is shared by the town's most famous son, the dual Booker Prize-winning novelist Peter Carey. Carey, who grew up in Bacchus Marsh, last week reiterated his vehement opposition to the plans, first voiced in *The Age* in March. Speaking about the fallen soldier George Mitchelson, whose tree is one of those to be removed and replaced on the roundabout, he said: "We planted this tree for our boy from Bacchus Marsh ... Let not time or expediency corrupt our solemn promise."

The National Trust's conservation manager, Paul Roser, says extending Woolpack Road north across the avenue via a 50-metre-wide roundabout "will ruin the experience and integrity of the avenue".

"Ballarat's Avenue of Honour suffered the indignity 15 years ago of being cut in half for the bypass, and VicRoads is now determined to show no respect for the cultural significance of the avenue in Bacchus Marsh," he says.

Meanwhile, Heritage Victoria has recommended that the avenue be included on the Victorian Heritage Register. Roser says it is a cause for concern that VicRoads has applied for a permit to begin the roadworks ahead of the registration hearing before the Heritage Council, which is scheduled for June 30.

Heather Shugg says those who oppose the construction of the the roundabout are not a "protest group".

"We're speaking as individual people who have lived in the town all our lives. We're just not in favour of them removing any trees from the avenue. They will have to find an alternative way. VicRoads must be able to provide an alternative."

Gwen Rasdell says she was "horrified" when she first heard about VicRoads' plans to change the avenue.

"It just *is* Bacchus Marsh. Take the avenue away and what have you got? It will just ruin it. You can't have the avenue with a great hunk cut out of the middle of it."

But not all of Bacchus Marsh is opposed to the plan. The local RSL, the chamber of commerce and all four Bacchus Marsh representatives on Moorabool Shire Council support the new road and roundabout, saying they will divert up to 400 trucks a day from driving through the centre of the town, and also save the trees from being damaged by toxic fumes or cars that crash into them.

They argue the roundabout would also make the avenue safer. According to the Shire of Moorabool, over the past 20 years 72 people have been injured in car accidents along the avenue, five of them fatally.

(Woolpack Road, which heads south from the avenue, currently resembles a country lane, but is handling heavy traffic more suitable to a major highway as it acts as an arterial connection to Werribee, Geelong, various farms, a tip and an abattoir.)

Supporters of the VicRoads plan also point to the significant role the road and roundabout could play in the economic development of the area.

According to the council, by 2031 Bacchus Marsh's population will leap to more than 23,000, up from 14,300 in 2006. The shire council is now considering developers' plans for 4832 residential homes to be built in estates south of the town. The council is also considering proposals for more than 300 hectares of industrial estates.

Councillor Allan Comrie says the town has major traffic congestion that needs to be resolved. "We're going to double in size, and we've got huge traffic problems in the town now, especially when the trains arrive, and school times. It's like a car park. Everybody is going crook at the traffic in the one road we've got to go through the town, from north to south. And when you've got trucks mixed up with B-doubles and everything else, it causes huge problems."

Malcolm Trask, president of Central Business Bacchus Marsh Inc, which represents more than 150 businesses in the town, says bypassing the avenue - that is, redirecting traffic from the Western Highway through an upgraded Woolpack Road - would ensure smooth access to the housing and industrial developments.

"This major infrastructure project will have a profound impact on our townships, in terms of economic development," he says "There will be businesses lining up to buy land out there and it will mean local jobs and stimulus to the local economy."

Another Moorabool councillor, Michael Tudball, says the council doesn't stand to gain financially from rates from the property development.

"Council doesn't stand to gain anything from the Anthony's Cutting realignment and the Woolpack Road extension, except a new road; and it's not our road, it'll be VicRoads' road."

Tudball supports the avenue overhaul. He says it will mean less congested roads, trees will be preserved and heavy-vehicle traffic will be able "to get around Bacchus Marsh, not go through Bacchus Marsh".

Bacchus Marsh RSL president Stan Franklin, backed by the state RSL, is confident governments have proposed the most practical solution to a difficult problem. He is dismissive of suggestions that the roundabout will have a negative impact on the avenue.

"What about the trucks now that are ruining the Avenue of Honour because they can't turn anywhere else?"

"I've stood there at Woolpack Road for an hour and watched the B-double trucks travelling up the Avenue of Honour towards Geelong, and not one truck can turn on the right side of the road. Stand there and watch them, and then ask me why we need a roundabout."

But John Murphy, also a member of the Bacchus Marsh RSL, is angry. His great-uncle, Tom Murphy, was killed in action in France in 1917 when he was 23, and has a tree (No. 176) on the avenue.

"I think it's desecration. They're going to cut the whole damn thing in half. I'm of the opinion that the avenue shouldn't be touched at all. It shouldn't be touched.

"It's a monument to every man that went out of this town, of which there are about 460 from Bacchus Marsh and district. And it's not just about single trees, it's about everybody's tree and everybody in this town. The community owns that Avenue of Honour.

"I don't agree with the RSL view if they want a roundabout there - I don't agree with the roundabout full stop and I don't agree with anyone touching one twig or tree in that avenue. Because it's ours."

Activities your school can do to help run an Avenue of Honour Awareness Day.

1. Wear Green Day. (Possibly as a fundraising activity)
2. Organise a visitor from the local RSL, Legacy, Garden History Society, National Trust or Historical Association to speak to the school about Avenues of Honour and the role and place of these memorials in our society.
3. Hold a commemorative tree planting event at your school. Can you plant a single tree of remembrance somewhere in your school grounds?
4. Make a presentation at assembly about your town's Avenue of Honour.
5. Take a photo of your school in front of your Avenue of Honour.