Australia's Avenues of Honour – Living memorials

Les allées d'honneur australiennes - Mémoriaux vivants

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This paper gives an overview and examples. Honour Avenues are poignant reminders of patriotism and community spirit. We need to conserve them, gain heritage listings and better management for their future.

Fraser Avenue, King's Park, Perth: Qld. lemon-scented gums. Not initially an Honour Avenue, but replanted in 1938 and dedicated as a memorial avenue in 1966, it replaced a failed ornamental avenue (S.Read).

'Australia … has more war memorials than any other country…Many believed that the utilitarian memorial was sacrilegious to the dead and so the idea of a living memorial gained favour. Planting trees was seen as a symbol of hope for the future but above all it was seen as something tangible which ordinary people could become personally involved with' (Correy, 1994).

Australia's 1914 population of 3 million had 415,000 in military service in World War 1. 60,000 died. This was one in five, leaving lasting scars. Avenues were a positive way to remember and honour them and others. One sample: in 1916 the Anzac troops' landing at Gallipoli led the Victorian Department of Education to encourage state schools to use Arbor Day to plant native trees to celebrate the landing. A number (avenues) remain.

Between 1917 and 1921, hundreds were planted. Australia's first was in Willunga in the Adelaide Hills (1915), then in Stirling, Mount Lofty, (SA: 9/9/1915) (Glenn Williams, pers. comm., 8/2018), followed by Torquay, Greater Geelong (Vic.: 23/6/1916), Ceres (Vic: 30/6/1916), other Victorian ones, then Laurieton, NSW (19/8/1916) and Eumundi in Queensland (1917). The most famous was planted from 1917-19, stretching over 22km between Ballarat and neighbouring town, Learmonth.

Treenet launched '*The Avenues of Honour 1915-2015 Project'* in 2004. It aimed to honour with a tree the memory of all who died for Australia, by documenting, preserving, reinstating and establishing new avenues by the 2015 Gallipoli Centenary. It succeeded. Treenet **combined** under the name 'Avenues of Honour' Boer War, WW1 and WW2 memorial avenues. This is different to the approach of the Australian Garden History Society (AGHS).

Treenet's survey in 2006 found 567 Avenues of Honour (half in Victoria) remaining in some form, some in poor condition. Most are on public land, managed by local Councils, some with management committees. Cockerell (2006?) cited a national survey of 533 councils and Returned Services League (RSL) branches identifying 80. She concluded in 2007 that **568** avenues were known around Australia. NB: that includes avenues for World War 2 and the Boer War.

The AGHS formed in 1980 from concern for historic gardens from a heritage perspective – seeking better recording, understanding, conservation and celebration. It has some 1500 members and a long interest in memorial avenues. Articles appeared in its journal, *Australian Garden History* from 1999 (Crone, 18).

Entries on 'Commemorative and Memorial Gardens' (Correy) and 'Avenues' (Dargavel) were in AGHS's benchmark 2002 reference, the *Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens* (OCAG). AGHS member Sarah Wood has toured a photographic exhibition of Victoria's avenues in 2010 at Melbourne's *Shrine of Remembrance*, in 2012 at Ballarat and more recently, in France.

As a member of AGHS's national management committee, I became aware of Treenet's project in 2010 and convinced colleagues it was worth mirroring and expanding. With input from branches and individuals, we have published a list of avenues since 2010. AGHS also publish a national 'Landscapes at Risk' list which includes avenues under threat. Both are at www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/advocacy.

AGHS's lists distinguish between **seven** eras and 'types' of plantings, one of which is Honour Avenues.

The aims in publishing such lists are to:

- inform community, AGHS members and branches;
- encourage action – e.g.: advocacy for replanting;
- encourage events promoting awareness and involvement; and
- advocate for heritage protection, replanting, interpretation and celebration.

August 2018 figures show AGHS has identified **412** Honour Avenues across Australia. We note a national upsurge in replanting, re-plaquing, creating new or replacement avenues over 2015's Centenary of Anzac and various WW1-related 2018 centenary dates. Following are brief overviews of some.

Queensland's oldest avenue is at Eumundi, on Memorial Drive (main street) and Gridley Street. It was dedicated on 6/10/1917 with 6 Qld. banyan trees (*Ficus sp.*) planted by the Women's Recruiting Committee. On 12/10/1918 relatives planted 12 more; on 23/8/1919 another planting to a total of 20 (for 20 dead men). These were 3 figs (*Ficus obliqua*), 5 camphor laurels, 3 lily pillies (*Syzygium paniculatum*) and a jacaranda. From 1914-18, 87 local men served. Only 5 trees survive, most replaced by the 1970s with camphor laurels, lily pillies and flame trees (*Brachychiton acerifolius)*. The first were replanted with road widening (wiki; QHR).

South Australia's two oldest honour avenues are in the Adelaide Hills, at Willunga and at Stirling-Mount Lofty. The latter was planted on 9 September 1915 and inspired the great Ballarat Avenue (1917-19). Mount Lofty's comprised 43 oak and 18 birches, on two roads meeting at a junction. The location was chosen for a nearby Boer War memorial. In 1924 a bandstand was erected nearby as memorial to local soldiers serving in WW1.

Gostwyck, Uralla's Honour Avenues (3, in a 'Y' form of three roads converging on a 1921 chapel for a loved son (Major Clive Collingwood Dangar MC) who died in WW1. 200 English (European) elms (Stuart Read).

Cudgewa in North-East Victoria's avenue of 1917 is a mix of Iranian chestnut-leaved oaks (Quercus castaneifolia), pin oaks (Q.palustris), Dutch (Ulmus x hollandica) and European elms (U.procera) planted by old boys of the public school and Mary Urquhart of Cudgewa station (Stuart Read).

Conclusion

Australia took to Honour Avenues. Recent centenaries brought funding and renewal by a new generation. Treenet and AGHS have played a part. More should be done: few enjoy heritage protection. The prognosis is good. Two examples: Heritage Victoria is currently advertising a consultancy to examine that state's avenues, for heritage listing and better management. The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) is nominating all that state's avenues for listing on its Significant Tree Register (online). These will likely lead to broader statutory listing by councils and the state government.

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VHD = Victorian Heritage Database, www.vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au

wiki = Wikipedia entry for Avenue of Honour – various Australian avenues

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