Cressy Discovery Trail

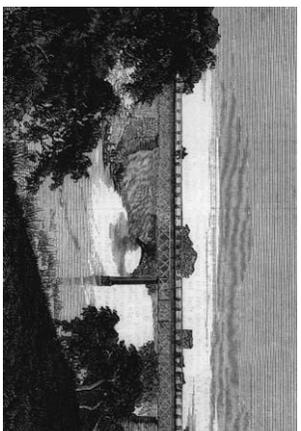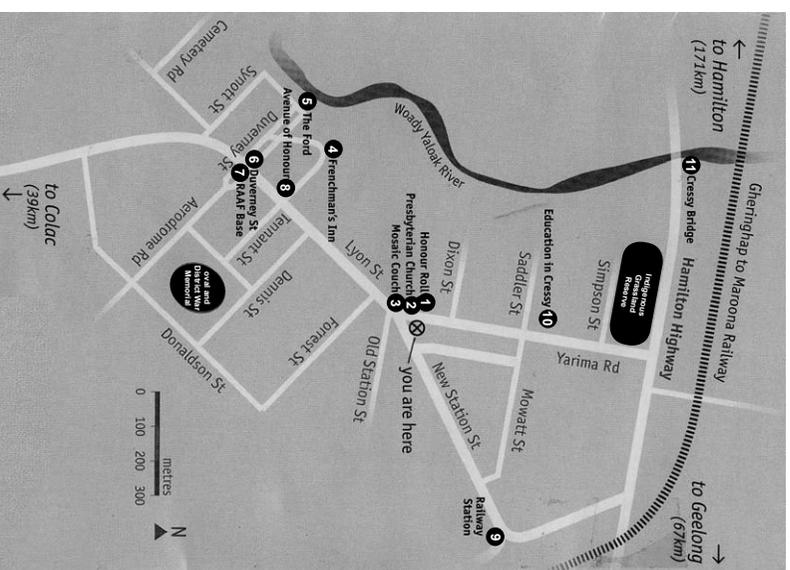## Otways Trails

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Cressy Discovery Trail

Cressy and it's beginnings

The area of Cressy was discovered about 1836 when George Russell from the Leigh District reported that there was some fine inland country and wrote "our journey took us over a track of treeless, windswept plains with a few lakes scattered around but they were mostly salt. There was only one river across this plain and we found a place to cross".

A Frenchmans, Jean Duverney came to Australia in 1837 and crossed the river at the same place and later decided to take up land on each side of the Woady Yallock River which became known as Frenchman's Run.

As there was much bullock and horse traffic crossing the river they decided to set up a rest house and with an increased in patrons they obtained a liquor licence.

The Government Gazette in February 1852 quoted "a site has been fixed for a village (Cressy) named Duverney's home town in France, Crecy near the Frenchman's Inn on the main road to Elephant Bridge and Port Fairy".

Map of Cressy Discovery Trail showing trail points 1–11, with streets including Cemetery Rd, Synott St, Duverney St, Avenue of Honour, Tennant St, Dennis St, Forest St, Donaldson St, Aerodrome Rd, Lyon St, Old Station St, New Station St, Mowatt St, Dixon St, Saddler St, Simpson St, Yarima Rd, Hamilton Highway. Points include: The Ford (5), Frenchman's Inn (4), RAAF Base (7), Railway Station (9), Education in Cressy (10), Cressy Bridge (11). Directions: to Colac (39km), to Hamilton (171km), to Geelong (67km), Gheringhap to Maroona Railway.

1. Honour Rolls

These can be viewed through the glass doors of the local Community Hall and were unveiled by Bruce Ruxton on 5th May, 2002, to replace the original one which was destroyed by the fires which ravaged the district 1977.

2. Presbyterian Church

This was the first to be established in the region.

Regular services commenced in Boyd's Bridge Hotel in 1859.

A decision to build a wooden church was made in 1860 but as subscriptions were so liberal a tender by Messers.Scott Bros to build a stone church was accepted and on 16th March 1862 the new church was opened. Following renovations the building was officially opened in April 2006 as the Cressy Historical Centre. This is now open to the public on the first Sunday of each month from 2-4pm.

3. Mosaic Couch

This was a Community Arts Project which the community developed in conjunction with artist, Pamela Irving and was unveiled by Colac Otway Shire Mayor on 16 November, 2003.

4. Frenchman's Inn

The plains around Cressy were first settled by a Frenchman called Jean Duverney or D'Auvergnay.

He settled on land around the Woady Yallock River and finding that most travellers crossed the river at this point he built a rest house.

However the many travellers stopping there necessitated the licensing of his inn so Duverney was granted a licence on 24th April 1841.

The Frenchman's Inn as it is now called was granted the first Hotel licence issued under Victorian legislation in July 1851.

5. The Ford

When Jean Duverney first settled in the District in 1838 he decided to build his rest house at a point where most travellers crossed the river. The ford was developed and used regularly for many years as a major route to the Portland Bay District.

In August 1849 tenders were called for the construction of a wooden bridge. This was erected opposite the inn and, after the town was surveyed, led into Duverney Street. In 1852 this bridge was destroyed by flood.

The ford retained its importance until the opening of a steel bridge on 20 October 1880.

6. Duverney Street

With the establishment of a rest house at Cressy by the French settler, Duverney it is safe to assume that the first business to be transacted in the area began in 1852 by the ford on the riverbank.

The first store in Duverney Street was opened in 1870 by Messrs. P. Mowat and D. Olliver.

Business was supported by drovers and teamsters going to and from Geelong.

As time evolved many businesses developed, some in Yarima Road, Hall, Station, Lyons and Dixon Streets but Duverney Street was regarded as the main street providing many essential services for over a century until the decline of business in the 1970's.

7. Cressy R.A.A.F. Base

Between 1939 and 1946 the Royal Australian Air Force operated a combat training aerodrome at Cressy.

Originally it was the No. 1 Armament Training Station.

Between 1942 and 1943 a general Reconnaisance School was incorporated with the course including submarine searching and ship spotting and recognition.

Between 1944 and 1945 Cressy became the central Gunnery School, the "top gun" course in Australia, utilizing MKV'S and Beaufort Bombers.

8. Memorial Stone & Avenue of Honour

This stone was dedicated by Bruce Ruxton, RSL State President on 5 May 2002 to commemorate all those who made the supreme sacrifice.

9. Cressy Railway Station

The Colac-Ballarat line opened in 1911 and the Geelong-Maroona line opened in 1913. The station had the largest signal box outside the metropolitan area.

It was reported that 26 trains passed through on one day in 1916.

There was an overhead footbridge, waiting rooms, refreshment rooms, goods shed, locomotive shed, stockyards, a coal stage and a reservoir.

In 1937 the use of more powerful locomotives required alterations to the yard.

After WW2 rail traffic began to decline but the station remained an important depot for servicing locomotives with coal and water.

With a decline in passenger services the Ballarat-Colac line closed in 1953.

10. Education in Cressy

Before formal education commenced schooling was conducted in private homes and then later in the Presbyterian bluestone Church.

The Cressy State School No. 731 was opened on 22nd January 1866. It was a new timber building and was located on the site of the present Police Station.

By 1911 gross overcrowding at the school prompted parents to lobby for a new school. The new school was built on its current location in Yarima Road and opened in March 1912. The wrought iron gate and the solid brick pillars at the entrance of the school were erected by former scholars to commemorate Cressy's Centenary.

The original school building was relocated to nearby Berrybank where it served as a classroom until it was destroyed in the 1944 fires. The Cressy Primary School still operates today.

11. Cressy Bridge

This is the oldest steel and iron bridge between Geelong and the South Australian border being built in 1854 from bluestone piers with wooden decking.

It was completely destroyed by fire on 23rd February, 1878 but was rebuilt by Humble & Nicholson in 1880 using the original piers at a cost of £4,542.

The Strategic location of Cressy meant the town was home to many Victorian Railway employees