The future

In many cases, in service competition with those multitude have made it difficult to sustain even these low-dearning ones of the towns centred in the new dating houses of the towns critical, where local and passing motor services will and businesses to the more local mill with by rebuilding buildings the larger towns, to colour buildings the impact of the town more than station, these provide good examples of how the future.

Site 26 & 27

Any remains they had been able to earn, available from Forrest General Store. A History of Forrest and Barramunga. By Jim Speirs.

Site 24

Keystones, secret keepers and special places.

Forestry in the Otways, By Jim Speirs.

Site 23 & 25

The School and the Anglican Church remind us that before Forrest existed there was a small settlement at Yaugher where the recreation reserve is now, about 2 km back towards Barwon Downs. Its timber mill and railway station were demolished in the 1930s, much to the regret of many local residents because it was a small settlement on the main road. The focus of the town moved from Station Street, with its railway buildings, timber mill and businesses to the main road, where local and passing motor services are available.

The school and the Anglican Church, By Jim Speirs.

For further information on the history of Forrest:

- By the Barwon, by Norman Houghton.
- Kanglang, by Jim Speirs.
- Otways Secret Treasures and Special Places, DVD by Jim Speirs.
- Lake Elizabeth, DVD by Jim Speirs.

Forrest History Walk

A one-hour walk to discover Forrest’s fascinating history.

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Look for the other Trail Notes in the series.

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Twenty seven plaques have been installed around the town (see map), with photos and information which we hope will stimulate your interest and imagination. Regrettably, most of our early buildings, such as the railway station, no longer exist. We have drawn on the memories of older residents for much of this information.

Further, an inseparable part of Forrest history was the many timber mills located out in the bush during the early part of the last century, sometimes, little townships in themselves, with school, store and post office. Many kilometres of tramlines, crossing spectacular trestle bridges, brought timber to the Forrest rail head in trains drawn first by horses and later, steam locomotives.

Site 1

Following the devastating bush fires of 1939 the Government decreed that operating sawmills were no longer safe in the bush. This is the site of one of the first sawmills established in the township itself.

Sites 2, 3 and 4

While nothing remains today, this area was the town centre for the first 60 years of the last century. Before the automobile and television a small country community relied a lot more on the activities they could generate themselves for their entertainment and leisure. Dances, shows, performances and sports days were popular, regular events.

Site 5

(The 300 metre walk to Site 5, the only steep stretch, to an attractive riverside site, can be omitted if you wish.) Take the Hennigan Crescent walking track and follow the path to the river. Here we see the only visible remains of one of the tram lines which brought thousands of super feet of sawn timber from mills located out in the bush. Century old bearers and a rail spike can be seen near the plaque. This photo shows the locomotive 'Tom Cue' just past this spot returning from the station yard. Note the roof top of the house behind the engine. Only a plum tree marks the site.

With their magnificent gum trees the river banks are a popular leisure spot for visitors and locals. The paths on either side of the river lead to the foot of the West Barwon Dam, (1km) and on to Lake Elizabeth (7km).

Site 6

Before automobiles, the whole focus of the town was the railway station and associated timber yards. As a consequence, the principle businesses lined Station Street, with the first sale of town lots taking place from 1890.

Site 7

Timber milling, along with dairy farming in the surrounding area, became the lifeblood of Forrest for almost a century. However as fewer trees became available the industry declined. The decision in 2006 to conserve the entire public forest area as the Great Otway National Park lead to the timber industry’s final demise.

Site 8

The timber building further down on the left, facing the street, was for many years a popular sweet shop and later the Post Office and Telephone Exchange.

Sites 9 – 18

Plaques describing the former businesses along Station Street and the Forrest Railway Station yards can be found on the notice board located in the picnic area.

You might like to note as you walk there the sites described; Number 26, residence, and sheds behind, of the former Whitehead Bus Service. Number 16, the former Bank and Electrical Shop. Number 14, the site of the Forrest Bakery, Number 12, originally Green's General Store and further on, at Number 6, the former site of the Forrest Butler's Shop.

Looking across at the quiet scene surrounding the tennis courts, we can imagine how different it was in the early days of Forrest with the bustling scene of the arrival of the train at the Railway Station, turning the steam engine at the turn table, and the constant work associated with loading and unloading timber from the mills onto rail carriages for shipment to the city. In earlier days passengers transferred from the train to coaches which took them on the gruelling eight hour trip to Apollo Bay.

Site 19

This vacant paddock was once another of the major social centres of the township of Forrest in the early days. The annual sports day attracted hundreds of people from the district and others coming by special train. The Hotel was nearby for refreshment. Down at the river was the popular township swimming hole. Here was also the virtual town common for townspeople to graze their cows. Can you pick out the route of the former railway, crossing the paddock?

Site 20

Forrest was not always the sedate township we know today. In fact it resembled a frontier town with its large and itinerant population of hardy timber workers who had no hesitation settling arguments in the time honoured way, using their fists and then resume drinking together again at the bar once matters were resolved. The Hotel and nearby boarding houses were home to many workers as well as providing a hostel for visitors.

Site 21

No picture has been found of the original Blacksmith's shop but it was remembered as a very large corrugated iron shed as it accommodated coaches and carts along with its Blacksmithing activities. The Blacksmith, Tom Curtis also ran the coach service to Apollo Bay.

Site 22

The difficulties of maintaining community services in a small town can be seen by the closure of its Catholic Church and even the closure of the subsequent high quality art gallery and coffee shop which could not be sustained.