



breathe easy...

Forrest History Walk



Otways Trails



OTWAYS TRAILS

Look for the other Trail Notes in the series. Copies of these notes are downloadable from the following websites:
www.visitotways.com
www.otwaycoast.com

Look for the Otways trails symbol:



When walking in the Otways make sure you follow these simple tips:

Sudden and extreme weather changes are common in the Otways, so carry practical all-weather clothing and remember that your mobile phone may be out of range. Always carry water, food, matches and a torch in case of emergency. Take note of signs and landmarks. Advise someone of your intended location and estimated time of return. Respect the environment and stay on marked paths. Do not damage vegetation or disturb wildlife. All native animals and plants are protected. No fires, including barbecues, can be lit on a day of total fire ban.



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Forrest History Walk

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

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 kms back towards Barwon Downs. Its timber mill and railway station were demolished but the church and school were relocated here.



Site 24

May Jennings' Milk Bar remains in the memory of many local residents because it was conveniently on their way to and from school and a good spot for pupils to spend any pennies they had been able to earn.

Site 26 & 27

These sites, provide good examples of how the focus of the town moved from Station Street, with its railway buildings, timber mills and businesses to the main road where local and passing motor vehicles now determine most of the towns current services. But faster cars and refrigeration have made it difficult to sustain even these services in competition with those available in nearby Colac.

The Future

Because of the natural beauty of its surroundings, Forrest has become a popular spot to settle for those seeking to escape the stress of city life. For visitors it provides ready access to the National Park, with its fern gullies and waterfalls, Lake Elizabeth, some 30kms of mountain bike and walking trails, Turton's Track and the Otway Fly.

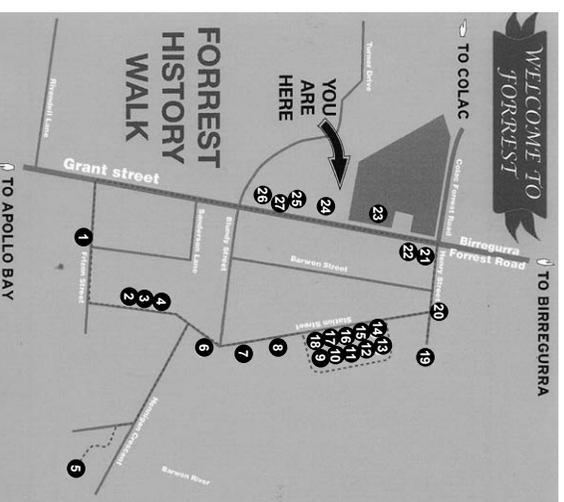
For further information on the history of Forrest:
By the Barwon, by Norman Houghton,
A History of Forrest and Barramunga.

Kanglang, by Jim Speirs,
Otway Secret Treasures and Special Places

Forestry in the Otways, DVD by Jim Speirs.

Lake Elizabeth, DVD by Jim Speirs.

Available from Forrest General Store.





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.

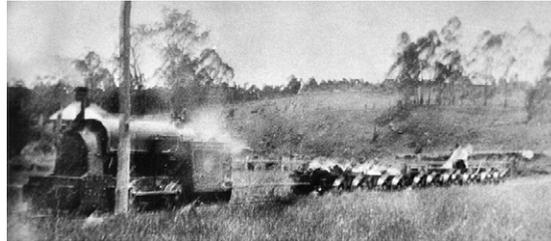
Sites 2, 3 and 4

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 led to the timber industry's final demise.



Mill workers



Forrest ladies picking hops

Site 8

The timber building further down on the left, fronting 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 Butcher'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.