

# Great Ocean Road Historic Markers

*A tribute to those who built the Great Ocean Road*



In 2007, as part of the Great Ocean Road's 75th anniversary celebrations, a series of commemorative bronze plaques and a statue at the Great Ocean Road Memorial Arch were unveiled.

The aim of these is to bring alive for travellers the stories of the people who lived and worked in the region. Hand sculptured by Dr Ross Bastiaan, and weighing 85 kilograms, each of the thirteen plaques feature information on the broad history of the road, a central detailed relief map of the area and information specific to the site they occupy.

*Pictured: Mt Defiance Memorial Wall*

## THE GREAT OCEAN ROAD

On 26 November 2007 the Great Ocean Road turned 75. It was a time to remember the road's wonderful past and to celebrate its present – and its future – as one of the greatest journeys on the planet.

The 3000 brave men who between 1918 and 1932 built the road, often using little more than a pick and shovel, would today be immensely proud of how their creation has not only weathered the years, but blossomed into a destination dubbed by the English travel magazine, Conde Nast Traveller, as one of the Top 20 journeys of a lifetime.

Across the Atlantic, Frommer's, the American travel Bible, put the Great Ocean Road in its top 10 road trips in the world. As well as being an iconic tourist destination, the Great Ocean Road plays a deeper, more spiritual role. It is also the world's biggest war memorial. The men who decades ago etched it into the coastline of south western Victoria, themselves returned soldiers, were building it in honour of their comrades killed in the First World War.

The Mayor of Geelong and the man also known as "The Father Of The Road", Howard Hitchcock dedicated himself to raising the funds to build the road. Often, when those funds were in short supply, he dug into his own pockets.

Travelling the State seeking moral and financial support for the project, Howard Hitchcock said: "What finer



*Pictured: Howard Hitchcock and the Great Ocean Road Trust*

memorial could be built to commemorate the magnificent bravery of our Victorian soldiers in the Great War? It will be a memorial to benefit soldiers and give pleasure to thousands of tourists."

Those thousands have now turned to millions, a number that grows and grows by the years as whatever the season, whatever the reason, people come from all over the world to complete their own journey of a lifetime along the Great Ocean Road.

A feature of the opening ceremony in 1932 was a cavalcade of vehicles, including one belonging to Hitchcock. He had died earlier in the year without seeing his vision completely fulfilled. In his honour, the passenger seat was empty, the only person in the vehicle his chauffeur.

## THE DIGGERS, GREAT OCEAN ROAD MEMORIAL ARCH

In April 2007, a special ceremony was held at Eastern View to unveil "The Diggers".

With one of the workers handing the other a drink, this work reflects the great Australian mateship that was not only a part of the building of the road, but which was so often on display in the First World War itself.

Set on a plinth of rock especially brought in from Port Fairy, "The Diggers" overlooks the Southern Ocean and the road.

The landscaped car park and boardwalks are a safe place to create the perfect photo record of a visit to the Great Ocean Road, with the Memorial Arch in the background.



*JULIE SQUIRES - THE DIGGERS SCULPTOR*

**Julie Squires has worked as a professional sculptor since 1993.** Originally from Newcastle, NSW, she moved to Melbourne in 2002. Her work is held in collections in Australia, Europe, China and the UK. Julie specialises in steel fabrication and bronze cast sculpture. Her work often has a narrative element and has proved to be both accessible and popular with the public. Julie spent many hours poring through the local historical societies and also visited the Australian War Memorial in Canberra before getting to work on the sculpture.



"After my research on the men I wanted to create a composition that expressed the friendship and bond between the workers as well as create a more dynamic gestured relationship between the two figures," she said.

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## GREAT OCEAN ROAD BRONZE PLAQUES

### TORQUAY (TO BE INSTALLED 2010)

Located at Spring Creek, the officially gazetted start of the Great Ocean Road. From humble colonial beginnings, Torquay has grown into a fine, year round seaside holiday resort and the capital of the surfing industry in Australia.

### ANGLESEA

The plaque is located on the banks of the Anglesea River in the heart of the town. Anglesea takes pride in being the place where the Great Ocean Road first comes in contact with the Southern Ocean.

### URQUHART BLUFF

The view back towards Anglesea is breathtaking. The plaque here tells the story of the early exploration of the region, and also the early problems encountered with road building prior to 1920.

### MEMORIAL ARCH

The plaque is part of a major Great Ocean Road feature that includes the wooden arch and also the new life-sized sculpture by Julie Squires, entitled "The Diggers". This is a must stop location for any traveller along the road. The plaque tells the story of the impact of World War I on the people of the region, and why the road became a memorial to those who did not return from that cataclysmic conflict.

### DEVILS ELBOW

This is the place to really begin to understand the difficulties of chipping the road out of the solid rock of the cliff face. There was no heavy machinery to break the rock and to carry it away. That was done with the combination of manual labour and packhorses.

### CINEMA POINT

Overlooking a picturesque valley and a particularly windy section of the Road, the text on this plaque explains the name origins of Cinema Point and the challenges in terms of labour, funding and travelling on this part of the Road.

### BIG HILL

On the western side of Big Hill in a large car park and with a spectacular view towards Lorne, the text on this plaque outlines the maritime history of the area: the role of the coastal ships in keeping the residents supplied with essentials and tales of the shipwrecks.

### LORNE

The plaque in beautiful Lorne is incorporated into the Lorne Visitor Centre landscape. The town has long held a central place in the story of the Great Ocean Road, something as vital now as in 1917, when the first charge was detonated to signal the beginning of construction.

### CUMBERLAND RIVER

Pull into the car park to visit plaque number nine in the series. Learn about the rugged but generally happy life of the returned soldiers building the Great Ocean Road, and the massive repair work to the hillside in this region.

### WYE RIVER

Located right at the main entrance to the beach, this plaque illustrates the importance of Wye River to the construction of the road, as well as its contribution to the timber industry in the Otways.

### CAPE PATTON

Carefully cut into the wall at Cape Patton to preserve the magnificent views at this picturesque lookout, the plaque tells the story of the maritime disasters along this section of the road and explains the difficulties experienced in constructing this section of the road.

### APOLLO BAY

Found at the main entrance of the Apollo Bay Visitor Information Centre, this plaque tells the story of Apollo Bay, starting with its whaling and timber heritage, through its agricultural and maritime years to the present.

### LAVERS HILL

Located at the highest point of the Great Ocean Road, the plaque, located next to 'the Drift' sculpture, commemorates Lavers Hill's timber heritage and the agricultural significance of the region.

### DR ROSS BASTIAAN - BRONZE PLAQUE SCULPTOR

Internationally renowned as a sculptor and war historian, Dr Ross Bastiaan volunteered his time and expertise to the creation of thirteen plaques on the Great Ocean Road.



*Pictured: Ross Bastiaan at the Memorial Arch Bronze Plaque*

Dr Bastiaan was on the Council of the Australian War Memorial, Canberra for 12 years. Since 1990 he has placed more than 200 multi-lingual bronze commemorative information plaques with bas-relief sculptures and maps on nearly every battlefield on which Australians have fought.

They are in 20 different countries around the world with many at Gallipoli, Singapore, Thailand, Papua- New Guinea, France and Belgium. Duplicates of these sculptures are on exhibition at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra; House of Commons, London and the Imperial War Museum in England. In 1995 Dr Bastiaan designed the Sir Edward Weary Dunlop memorial in St Kilda Road, Melbourne. Refer to [www.plaques.satlink.com.au](http://www.plaques.satlink.com.au) for previous major sculpted works by Dr Bastiaan.