

# shire of eltham historical society

p.o. box 137, eltham, victoria, 3095.

## newsletter no.6 may 1979

### MAY MEETING

The next meeting of the Society will be held at 8 p.m. on Wednesday 9th May, 1979, in the War Memorial Hall, 905 Main Road, Eltham. Guest speaker at this meeting is Mrs. Shirley Jones, Vice-President of Nunawading Historical Society, who will speak on the subject of Schwerkolt Cottage. This historic cottage in Deep Creek Road, Mitcham, has been preserved by the Nunawading society. Mrs. Jones' talk will cover both the history of the cottage and the more recent aspects of preservation and management by the society.

The meeting will follow our usual format of an informal discussion with the guest speaker and will be followed by coffee and biscuits.

### OFFICE BEARERS.

The Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on 14th March, 1979. The following office bearers were elected for the ensuing year :-

President	Peter Bassett-Smith
Vice Presidents	Bruce Ness, Jim Sidwell
Secretary	Russell Yeoman
Assist. Secretary	Kath Stephenson
Treasurer	Graham Beyer
Committee	Mr. R. Smith, Mesdames J. Ness, P. Macdonald, O. Smith.

Two former office bearers, Vice President Mrs. A. Cahn, and committee member Mrs. F. Spicer have been unable to continue in those positions. The Society's thanks are extended to these two members for their contribution to the committee over past years.

Members and other interested persons are urged to contact office bearers on any aspect of the Society's activities and in particular with suggestions for Society activities or improvements to the Society.

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

At the Annual General Meeting subscriptions for 1979 were fixed at the same level as for the past few years.

Adult \$3.00 Student \$1.00 Family or group \$5.00

### SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE

and may be paid at the next meeting, or sent to the above address.

Subscriptions cover only the operating expenses of the Society and are the only source of funds for this purpose. Early payment is requested.

### EARLY SETTLER'S HOUSE, ELY STREET.

The society has been recently involved in moves to preserve an old timber dwelling in Ely Street, overlooking the Eltham High School. Application has been made to Historic Buildings Preservation Council for inclusion of the building in the Register of Historic Buildings and approaches have been made to the Shire of Eltham and the land owner regarding preservation of the house.

The land on which the house stands is to be subdivided into residential lots. The owner Cronus Pty. Ltd. has now offered the building and the land on which it stands to the Council free of charge, subject to certain minor modifications to the subdivision. The Council has agreed to support the modification and the chances of preservation of the building and the majority of its outbuildings on their present site are considered to be quite good.

Considerable research into the history of the building has been carried out on behalf of the Historic Buildings Preservation Council. It is believed that origins of the building are still somewhat obscure but full details of the research results have not yet ascertained. The matter of inclusion in the Register is still under consideration.

The land on which the house stands is within the Crown Township of Eltham and was known as cultivation allotment 3 with an area of just over 1 ha. (This lot comprises only about one quarter of the land to be subdivided). This land was sold by the Crown in 1852 to Charles Brown, a stock



and commission agent of Bourke Street, Melbourne, for nine pounds fifteen shillings.

Brown apparently did not live on the land and probably bought it and other nearby land for speculative purposes. The land was soon sold to one Frederick Edward Falkiner who had occupied the area prior to the land sales and had bought one of the cultivation allotments (C.A. 17) without having to compete at public auction. The reason for the purchase of C A 17 in this manner was that improvements on the property were regarded as the property of Falkiner. According to Surveyor Hurst (son of Henry of Hurstbridge fame) the improvements comprised "1 $\frac{1}{2}$  acres of cultivation, a very dilapidated five-roomed hut of sawn slabs, also a rough hut used as a dairy, total value 30 pounds."

The house which we are now interested in preserving was apparently built or shifted to the site by Falkiner probably in the 1850's. Suggestions that it was previously a school have not been supported by any available evidence. The house was owned by the Falkiner family until the 1920's when it was bought by Mr. R. Maynard who recently sold the land to the present owners.

The most significant participant in the history of this house is Frederick Falkiner and it is appropriate to record some further details of his residence in this area.

Falkiner came to Port Phillip in October 1836 and began business as a horse dealer. He purchased his pastoral run on the lower Diamond Creek in 1847 from Joseph Wilson who in turn purchased it from Henry Foley 1845. Foley was the original occupier of this area in 1840. These purchases were of course before the original freehold land sales and involved only squatting rights or leasehold land together with any improvements. In 1849 Falkiner applied for three 640 acre leases in the Parish of Nillumbik. Also in that year Mr. John Semar who held a licence to depa sture stock on the run known as "Semars" or "Arthur" on the Diamond Creek requested that the licence be transferred to "Alex Falconer of Melbourne". This person may well have been Frederick Falkiner.

Falkiner's name appears from time to time in various records of the area. In 1848 a complaint was made by Thomas Sweeney and others that Falkiner was impounding their cattle. In 1854 Falkiner was appointed Eltham's first postmaster, a position which he held for just over a year. The existing house may well have been the first post office. Also in that year Falkiner complained about the Building Committee of the Little Eltham School, a complaint deemed "frivolous and vexatious" by the Rev. Goodman of Heidelberg. In 1858 he was fined five pounds for carelessly setting fire to his stubble yet in the same year he was auditor of the accounts of the Eltham District Road Board.

The present Falkiner Street adjoins Falkiner's original crown grant.

Much of the information in this item has been obtained from original source material researched for the society by Mr. K. Chappel.

#### ELTHAM COMMUNITY FESTIVAL.

This year the festival will be held from 11th to 20th August. It has been agreed by the Committee that the society should participate. Suggestions that the society play a major role in organizing a Back to Eltham as the theme of the Festival have not proved to be practicable for this year. Current Committee thinking is that we should participate in the Festival procession. Comment and offers of help in this regard are sought together with suggestions for any additional or alternative involvement. Please contact the secretary with your ideas.

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