

# shire of eltham historical society

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## newsletter no. 8 september 1979

### SEPTEMBER MEETING

The next meeting of the society will be held at 8pm on Wednesday 12th September, 1979 in the War Memorial Hall, 905 Main Road, Eltham.

This meeting will be held during Nationwide Map Week and it is therefore appropriate that the subject of the meeting is maps. Guest speaker will be Mr. Griffin Barlett, whose varied historical interests include an extensive collection of historical maps. He is a member of the Map Curators' Circle and is an acknowledged authority on the subject. Mr. Bartlett will display a number of rare and interesting maps from his collection. Members who were present at the February meeting will recall that Mr. Bartlett provided a very entertaining evening when he spoke on the preservation and restoration of historic buildings. Whilst the writer is somewhat prejudiced by a personal interest in maps, it is suggested that if you can only attend one meeting this year, this should be the one.

As with all of our meetings new members and visitors are more than welcome.

### ELTHAM COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

The Society's participation in this year's Eltham Community Festival was highly successful. We arranged an exhibition in the Eltham Library on the theme of "Along the Main Road" and our float in the Festival Grand Parade won the prize donated by Pegasus Interiors for the best Eltham theme. The success of the float was due mainly to the efforts of Joh Ebeli. Joh was entirely responsible for the design and artistic work on the float and with help from Geoffery Loftus-Hills and Mark Gough actually constructed it. Members and friends together with members of the Victorian Folk Music Club completed the picture, riding on and walking with the float in the parade. Mrs. Opal Smith and Mrs. B. Brinkkötter organized many of the costumes for participating members and Mrs. Phyllis Macdonald made the arrangements with the Victorian Folk Music Club. Thanks are also due to Mr. P. Quirke of Research Fruit Supply for the loan of his truck and to Eltham Hardware and Plumbing Supplies for the donation of materials for construction of the float. The \$50.00 prize is to be shared with the Victorian Folk Music Club.

It is considered that participation in the parade should become an important annual event for the society. Now is the time to start thinking about next year's parade. It has been suggested that over the next year members could make appropriate costumes to wear in the parade. Advice is available for anyone wishing to make their own period costume. This year's effort was successful despite some last minute doubts. How much more successful can we be with long term planning?

### OLD BAKERY

There has recently been a substantial amount of publicity in the local press regarding the demolition of the old baker's shop on the corner of Main Road and York Street, Eltham.

The old weatherboard building, possibly dating from the 1860's, comprised a dwelling with a shop in the front room opening off a timber verandah deck which directly fronted the Main Road footpath. At the rear is a brick building of much later date which was for many years used for the bakery. The buildings are being demolished for flat construction.

Recent publicity has been oriented towards moves to preserve the weatherboard building. Preservation initiatives have come from a number of individuals including members of this society. It should be noted that the society has no official connection with any proposal to retain the building on its present site or to re-build the building or any part of it on any other site. The issues involved in this matter are part of a wider consideration of the matter of preservation of historic buildings which is further examined in a separate article in this Newsletter.

In this case the Society and in particular the committee has been aware for some years of the impending demolition. The possibility of the preservation of the building has been canvassed on a number of occasions. The Society's view is that while the baker's shop is an interesting old building which contributes to the character of Main Road, it is not of sufficient importance to wage an organized campaign for its preservation. It is considered that if the building were to be preserved for historical reasons it would be far more desirable to retain it in its present location than to re-build it on another site.

The comments made here are not intended to be derogatory of any move to preserve the building or to discourage any Society members who wish to be involved in any such project. Rather, the Society encourages any private initiatives in this regard and is prepared to offer advice and such assistance as can be practically provided within the Society's resources.

At the time of writing the building has been substantially demolished. It is not known whether the proposal to retain part of the building for re-erection elsewhere is proceeding or not. Substantial funds would be required for any re-creation and restoration project. The Society considers that at this time the highest priority for allocation of any funds available for local historical preservation works is the restoration and preservation of the Old Cottage in Ely Street.



PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL BUILDINGS

The Shire of Eltham has adopted a resolution to draw up a "draft historical preservation permit list" listing those structures of historical importance which should be preserved. Whilst the Society applauds any interest in local history on the part of the Council, it believes that the preparation of any such list should be approached with a great deal of caution.

The Society's records have for many years contained details of buildings, places and things which are important in varying degrees to the history of the area. No attempt has been made to produce a formal list or to set any sort of priority ranking. There are however, buildings in the area which, if threatened, would be the subject of a vigorous campaign by the Society. Other buildings whilst being of sufficient importance to be noteworthy may not warrant any organized campaign for preservation.

Some of the dangers seen in drawing up a preservation list are:-

1. Liability for compensation if demolition permit refused.
2. Lack of real power on the part of the Council to refuse demolition permits on historical or environmental grounds.
3. Too many authorities/organizations purporting to control or influence the demolition of buildings. At present there exist three, the National Trust, Historic Buildings Preservation Council and Australian Heritage Commission.
4. The owner of the building etc. should have the right of objection to inclusion on the list.
5. Buildings etc. should not be arbitrarily included on the list. A proper assessment by qualified or experienced persons should be made before any item is included. The Society does not have any significant expertise in this field. The inclusion of less important items in the list would tend to lessen its standing.
6. Some items are worthy of preservation for other than historical reasons. These should be distinguished in the list.

Many of the above matters are recognized in the Historic Buildings Act and procedures are set down to ensure that any registration is soundly based. It is considered that the act provides sufficient protection for buildings etc. important enough to be included on the register and that the ultimate protection should be by application for inclusion of any such building. Any building of special local importance which is rejected for inclusion may have to be the subject of special consideration.

The Society's view is that the Council should be encouraged to become involved in this field but that any list prepared should be of an advisory rather than a prohibitive nature. Any demolition or development proposals involving any listed item should be considered in the light of such a list but not be the subject of automatic rejection because of the listing. Appropriate expert advice should be obtained before inclusion of any item on the list.

RESEARCH NOTES

A further 30 pages of research notes have been received from Mr.Keith Chappel. They bring the total received over the last few years to 454 pages. The latest notes include details of original land purchasers around Eltham, details of Councillors, 1871-1978, and an alphabetical index for a substantial part of the overall project. Mr.Chappel's work is providing an invaluable record of local history from a variety of archival sources.

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