

shire of eltham historical society

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

newsletter no.20 sept. 1981

NEXT MEETING 8 P.M. WEDNESDAY 9TH SEPTEMBER, 1981

WAR MEMORIAL HALL, 905 MAIN ROAD, ELTHAM

SUBJECT: THE SMITHS AND OTHER PIONEER FAMILIES OF

SMITHS GULLY

NEW MEMBERS AND VISITORS ARE WELCOME

Smiths Gully township, near St. Andrews in the northern part of the Shire of Eltham, is today just a small group of houses, each generally on the combined area of several of the old township allotments. There are no shops, school or other public facilities (although the shop which has existed for many years nearby at the corner of Smiths Gully Road and the main road between Pantton Hill and St. Andrews is now called the Smiths Gully Store).

The town was not always such a backwater. It was once a busy goldfields settlement, centrally located on the Caledonia Diggings. Whilst it was largely overshadowed by nearby Queenstown or St. Andrews, it did contain all the usual township facilities of the day including a school, Mechanics Institute and shops.

The original Smith of Smiths Gully is said to be one Samuel Smith, an English engineer who made his mark in the area as a goldfields butcher. This meeting will be a discussion evening, concentrating generally on Smiths Gully and more particularly on the Smith family and some other pioneer families of the area. We have invited to the meeting Mr. Keith Smith of Doncaster who is a great grandson of Samuel Smith and is also a descendant of two other pioneer families, the Joyces and the Hopkinsons. Keith was after his family left Smiths Gully but has gleaned much information from family records and particularly from his mother Mrs. Grace Smith who died earlier this year, aged 97 (see Newsletter No. 18 May 1981).

Other descendants of the pioneer families have been invited to the meeting to join in the discussion. Samuel Smith had eight children and contact between the various branches of the family has been lost over the years. We are grateful to the Diamond Valley News for publishing a short article in the hope of attracting other family members to our meeting.

In November 1978 the Society conducted an excursion to the St. Andrews and Smiths Gully areas led by members of the Joyce family. That excursion attracted a number of members of pioneer families of the area. Notes and tapes of discussions have been kept and will be used to assist in the meeting.

This meeting will follow the informal discussion pattern which has been used quite successfully by the Society at a number of recent meetings. Our guest or guests are invited as participants rather than lecturers and the success of the meeting depends also on the participation of members. In addition to providing an entertaining evening for members it is expected that the discussion will result in additional information to supplement Society records and suggest further areas of research.

ELTHAM COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

This year's festival will be held from 16th to 18th October, with the festival parade being held on Saturday 17th. In recent years the Society has participated in the parade and also organized a display for the festival. We have won prizes for our parade entry for the last two years.

The committee has given preliminary consideration to our participation and it has been agreed that we should again enter the procession. This matter will be discussed at the September meeting.

PARK NAME ASSIGNED.

The January 1981 issue of this newsletter contained details of a proposal under investigation by the Victorian Place Names Committee to assign the name Alistair Knox Park to the area generally known as the Eltham Town Park. The Place Names Committee was advised that this Society favoured the latter name. Advice has now been received that the Place Names Committee has assigned the name Alistair Knox Park. The proposal is being advertised and two months are allowed for formal objections.

The Society's committee has considered this latest advice and has decided that the matter should not be pursued by the Society. Although the decision is not in accordance with its wishes it is considered that the Society's views have been sufficiently aired.

YARRA GLEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

Advice has been received that an historical society has recently been formed at Yarra Glen. It has apparently been stimulated by historical research being carried out by a group of local people. Yarra Glen, now within the Shire of Healesville was part of the East Riding of the Shire of Eltham until 1958. The Rysis brothers early pastoralists in the area, then known as Yarra Flats, established a dray track to their property through Eltham and Kangaroo Ground, which roughly followed the line of the present Main Road.

The early history of the area was linked with Eltham but its associations now are more with Lilydale and Healesville.

We look forward to friendly contact with the new society as with other nearby societies.

DIAMOND VALLEY NEWS.

This paper has commenced a series of articles on historic local buildings. The Society is providing information and contacts for interviews for the articles. Subjects so far have included Wingrove Cottage, Eltham Primary School and the former Jarrold cottage near Dalton Street. Any member who can assist with suggestions or information for articles is asked to contact the Secretary. The paper is to be commended on its promotion of local in this way.

THE SHIRE OF ELTHAM - A PERSPECTIVE.

This is the title of an important demographic study of the Shire of Eltham which has recently been completed, and is available from the Shire Offices at a cost of \$3.00. It is largely the work of the Council's Strategic Planner Mr. Lodi Franciscori. The majority of the study consists of statistical information on the Shire and analysis of that information. It also contains sections on the physical characteristics and history of the Shire written by Russell Yeoman.

The study will provide a useful basis for forward planning in both the public and private sectors. It can also provide important statistical information for serious historical research.

From this Society's point of view, perhaps its greatest significance is that there is now available a brief history of the Shire, suitable for general information and school projects. This section of the report is available free of charge to members or anyone else interested by contacting the Secretary or by personal enquiry at the Eltham Shire Offices.

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