

shire of eltham historical society

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

newsletter no.24

may 1982

NEXT MEETING: 8PM WEDNESDAY 12TH MAY, 1982

SHIRE OFFICES, 895 MAIN ROAD, ELTHAM

FILM NIGHT: FEATURING BOARD OF WORKS FILMS OF LOCAL AND
HISTORICAL INTEREST

From an extensive range of films featuring Board of Works activities, we have selected four as being of general historical interest or containing a significant local interest component. Details of the films are as follows;

"Space to Breathe" which outlines the historical development of urban parks in Melbourne and looks at the recent establishment of parks along the Yarra, Dandenong and Maribyrnong Valleys. The Yarra Valley Metropolitan Park will extend from Balleen to Warrandyte, including significant areas of the river valley near Eltham.

"Water for Melbourne" The Board's work in connection with Melbourne's water supply, including the historical aspects of the Thomson River area and its association with the early gold discoveries.

"Streams of Our City" The early history of Melbourne's waterways and the Board's involvement in their maintenance and restoration.

"Building Sugarloaf" Construction of the Sugarloaf (Winneke) Reservoir, near Christmas Hills.

Whether you are seeking entertainment or information, these professionally produced films are sure to provide the right balance of these components to guarantee an interesting evening.
As with all of our meetings new members and visitors are most welcome.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Society has found it necessary to raise the annual subscription from \$3.00 to \$4.00. This is the first rise in many years and the new subscription remains a nominal amount intended only to cover the operating expenses of the society. Student and family subscriptions at \$1.00 and \$5.00 respectively remain unchanged.

SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE.

Please complete the attached form and forward with your subscription to the Society's post office box or hand it to the Treasurer at the next meeting. Subscriptions are the Society's main source of funds and it is essential to the continued operation of the Society that they be paid promptly.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

At the Society's Annual General Meeting on 10th March 1982 all of last year's office bearers and Committee members were re-elected. The Committee includes members co-opted during the past year. Those elected are as follows ;

President	Kath Stephenson
Vice Presidents	Cr. Alan Baker Chris Spriggs
Secretary	Russell Yeoman
Assistant Sec.	Paul Smith
Treasurer	Graham Meyer
Committee	Peter Fassett-Smith, Joh Ebelt, Phyllis Macdonald, Bruce Ness, Jim Sidwell, Ron Smith.

A panel discussion on the theme "The Eltham Landscape" followed the formal business of the meeting. As with panel type discussion held at previous meetings this format proved very successful.

WILLIAMSTOWN TRIP

The trip to Williamstown on 21st March was highly successful from any point of view. The one disappointment was that we were so successful in filling the bus that a few people with late bookings could not go. We apologize to those who missed out. The Williamstown Historical Society showed us their excellent museum, arranged afternoon tea and provided a well informed guide for a trip around the sights of their city. Their obvious enthusiasm for informing visitors about Williamstown contributed in no small way to the enjoyment of the day.

FORMER FALKINER HOUSE, ELY STREET, ELTHAM.

Since 1978 the Society has been involved in moves to preserve an old timber dwelling in Ely Street west of the Eltham High School. The property on which the house stood was subdivided into residential allotments, but following representations from the Eltham Shire Council the subdivider agreed to transfer to the Council a small area of land containing the house and outbuildings.

It now seems that, despite the generosity of the subdivider and the action by the Council and the Society, the Council may have no option but to demolish the building. It is in derelict condition due to its age and recent action by vandals. The Council has received complaints from nearby residents requesting that some action be taken.

Restoration would require replacement of most components except the external cladding. The cost of restoration would be high. Despite lengthy consideration no beneficial use can be found for the building and allocation of funds by any body would need to be justified purely on the historic value of the building. An application by the Society to the Historic Buildings Preservation Council for registration was unsuccessful, as were applications by the Council for funds from the National Estate Programme.

From an appearance point of view the house now appears to be almost squashed into the back yards of recently constructed houses and is very much out of character with its surroundings. In its former setting facing a large open paddock it did contribute to the character of the area.

The known history of the house, the land and its former owner Frederick Falkiner were the subject of an article in Newsletter No. 6. (May, 1979). Research by the Historic Buildings Preservation Council has not produced any important new information. In particular claims that the building was a former school shifted to the site have not been confirmed and appear unlikely.

In all of the circumstances the Society cannot raise strong opposition to the demolition unless it is prepared to accept responsibility for restoration of the building within a very short time. The Committee considers that neither the financial nor manpower resources are available for such a commitment.

The Eltham Shire Council has been advised of the Society's position. Any decision by the Council to demolish the building should be handled very sensitively because the land was donated to it for the purpose of preserving the building. A request has been made, that, if the building is demolished, the Society be permitted to take and store any salvagable materials for possible use in some future historical project.

Kath Stephenson
President
439 9588

Russell Yeoman
Secretary
439 9717