

# SHIRE OF ELTHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 137 ELTHAM VICTORIA 3095

## NEWSLETTER

№37

JULY 1984

### NEXT MEETING

8p.m. WEDNESDAY 11th JULY, 1984

ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZENS CENTRE

OFF MAIN ROAD, ELTHAM

(ENTER FROM SHIRE OFFICE DRIVEWAY)

### DISCUSSION EVENING

"MONTMORENCY - SOME PERSONAL MEMORIES"

DISCUSSION LEADER - MARJORIE NORTH

VISITORS & NEW MEMBERS WELCOME

The history of Montmorency has received some attention from those documenting the history of the local area but it certainly has not been as well publicized as the history of some other parts of the Shire of Eltham.

Until the coming of the railway in 1902, Montmorency was a large farm property. The railway cut through the property and led to subdivision into small semi-rural holdings and smaller residential lots.

Discussion will centre on development of Montmorency as a residential area as remembered by a group of residents of long standing. Leader of discussion will be Marjorie North who says she has vivid recollections of a young person's views of the early development of the area. In particular Mrs. North remembers the people and her reminiscences will include many anecdotes about local identities. She says that dates and formal type historical details will be better left to some of the other locals.

A significant number of members now live in Montmorency or close by and this meeting will be of special interest to them. This local subject should also prove most interesting to other members.

At the start of the meeting Sergeant Arthur Traynor of the Eltham Police will give a brief talk on "Operation Stopburg". During July Police officers are talking to various community groups in connection with this campaign to make homes and other premises safe from burglaries.

### SLAB COTTAGE, WARRANDYTE.

That part of Warrandyte lying north of the Yarra River is within the Shire of Eltham and is thus within the sphere of interest of our Society. However the major role in respect of historical matters in this area is taken by the Warrandyte Historical Society, a very active group with which we have enjoyed good relations over a number of years. Our President, Kath Stephenson and Committee member Peter Bassett-Smith have been involved in a committee, initiated by the Warrandyte Society for the purpose of preserving a slab cottage discovered during the demolition of a house which had been built around it. The cottage is located just north of the Warrandyte bridge. Its historical importance has been recognized by its speedy classification by the National Trust and registration by the Historic Buildings Council.

The actions of the Shire of Eltham and the City of Doncaster and Templestowe in resolving to jointly fund the purchase of the site are very heartily commended.

The following article on the cottage was written by Cliff Green, President of Warrandyte Historical Society and is reprinted from that Society's Newsletter.

#### HISTORIC COTTAGE REVEALED

Some time around 1920 an elderly Warrandyte resident built a new house, and at the same time preserved for posterity a tangible link with our pioneering past.

Her name was Mary Morrison, and over the past number of weeks your Society and a number of other organizations and individuals in Warrandyte and beyond have been working to ensure that Miss Morrison's endeavours were not in vain.

When local builder Max Green (no relation to myself, incidentally!) rang the Society and reported that he had "uncovered" an old miner's hut inside a house he was demolishing, we were very interested. When he further explained that he was prepared to donate the hut to the Society, provided we could remove it from the site by a given date, we were both grateful and delighted. But when we actually saw the building we were ecstatic!

We were aware of the existence of a number of other old buildings contained within the structures of newer houses around Warrandyte. But these had all been modified over the years, usually losing most of their historic interest in the process. But the Castle Road hut was different. Here was a primitive bark-roofed cottage in near perfect condition. It looked as though it had been built only yesterday. We felt privileged to be able to stand and look at it, so evocative of a past era did it seem. Not dilapidated and weather-beaten, not even restored, but original!

The events that followed are now well known. How we brought experts from the National Trust and elsewhere to advise us on its relocation; how they convinced us that it would be an act of vandalism to attempt to do so, and how we determined, there and then, to attempt to purchase the site. How the whole community rallied around; how Max and Jenny Green, the owner/builders, co-operated with us at every stage, and how our two municipalities were convinced by two of their number - Cr. Ken McKenzie of Doncaster - Templestowe and Cr. Robert Marshall of Eltham - that they should step in and purchase the land on behalf of Warrandyte of the future.

Research into the origins of the cottage is proceeding. It is thought that it may have been built around 1900. It appears on a Crown survey carried out in 1905. The two acre site, then extending along Kangaroo Ground Road from what is now Castle Road to the bridge, was purchased from the Crown by Mary Morrison in 1906. Miss Morrison called her property 'Stoney Brae' and lived at first in the fine weatherboard house that still stands overlooking the bridge, and is now occupied by Mr. Arthur Donald. Some time around 1920 she decided to build a smaller house on her land and chose to 'enclose' the tiny slab cottage that had remained in good condition in her orchard, and of which she was obviously proud.

We know from relatives still living, who were children at the time, that the way in which it was enclosed, without damage to its fabric, with barely a nail touching, was quite deliberate. Mary Morrison was a conservationist, with a deep love of nature and for the past. Although she was not the builder, 'her' little cottage will soon stand, protected and accessible, as a memorial to her foresight and sensitivity.

#### RECENT ACTIVITIES

The May meeting of the Society provided an interesting insight on the frustrations of a would be author. Mary Motschall told the story of the writing and publication of her book "Wild Wood Days at Panton Hill". Members showed a great deal of interest in both these aspects and the stories from the book dealing with the history of the Smith and Motschall families and the township of Panton Hill. Mrs. Motschall presented a copy of her book to the Society.

Williamstown Historical Society visited Eltham on Wednesday 23rd May and were given a guided tour of Eltham following a picnic lunch at Montsalvat. Peter Bassett-Smith acted as guide. Thanks are extended to Peter and Society members who organized afternoon tea for the Williamstown people at the Senior Citizens Centre.

#### MALDON TRIP

The Committee is investigating the feasibility of arranging a two day trip to Maldon in late October. It could be on a weekend or during the week and it could be a standard bus or mini bus according to numbers.

Please advise the Secretary if you are interested. A decision will be made at the August Committee Meeting whether to proceed and details would be given in the September Newsletter.

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