



# Shire of Eltham Historical Society

## NEWSLETTER

P.O. BOX 137 ELTHAM VICTORIA 3095

NO.57 NOVEMBER 1987

ELTHAM COMMUNITY FESTIVAL PARADE

11.30A.M. SATURDAY 7 NOVEMBER 1987  
ASSEMBLE IN CECIL STREET, ELTHAM

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NEXT MEETING

8 P.M. WEDNESDAY 11 NOVEMBER 1987  
ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZEN'S CENTRE  
MAIN ROAD, ELTHAM  
(ENTER FROM SHIRE OFFICE DRIVEWAY)

GUEST SPEAKER: DAVID CAMERON, BOTANIST,  
"THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ELTHAM  
AREA FOR NATURE CONSERVATION"

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SPRING EXCURSION

CHURCHILL ISLAND  
SUNDAY 22 NOVEMBER 1987  
LEAVES ELTHAM SHIRE OFFICE 9 A.M.

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CHRISTMAS FUNCTION

6.30 P.M. WEDNESDAY 9 DECEMBER, 1987  
ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZEN'S CENTRE

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MORE DETAILS FOLLOW



### Eltham Community Festival.

As usual, we will be entering a float in the Festival Parade. This year our theme will be "Washing Day in the 1800's", which will be based on Bruce Ness' truck, together with a large trailer. The idea is to use a number of the larger implements owned by or available to the Society such as an early washing machine, troughs, copper and mangle. People should come dressed in appropriate period costume. Sue Law has a number of long white aprons available and these, in combination with long dresses, would be ideal. If you need one of these for the parade ring her on 439-9520. The suggestion has been made that, as the men's clothes are being washed, they should be in long underwear. Anyone game?

Musicians from the Victorian Folk Music Club will again join us in the Parade. Some space will be available on the float but come prepared to walk alongside if you can.

With the different theme this year the Parade promises to be more fun than usual. Members who have not previously taken part are encouraged to join in, Assemble in Cecil Street at 11.30 a.m. prior to the start of the parade at 12 noon.

### November Meeting:

David Cameron is a Warrandyte botanist with a major interest in the native plants of the local area. He has conducted plant surveys of a number of local bushland reserves and has played a significant role in identification of the habitat of the Eltham Copper Butterfly.

David's talk will deal with historical aspects of the local vegetation and the importance of the remaining bushland areas. Examples of important areas will include the butterfly habitat and the Professors Hill wildflower reserve in North Warrandyte. Some of the important, rarer, and better known plant species will be discussed.

David's skills include an ability to pass on to others his enthusiasm for the natural environment. His talk will be illustrated by slides from his collection. The subject is of popular interest and is most appropriate during this, the wildflower season.

New members and visitors are most welcome to attend this meeting.

### Churchill Island Trip:

As usual at this time of the year we have organised a bus trip to a place of historical interest. Churchill Island is a small island adjacent to Phillip Island.

It is the site where James Grant planted the first crops in Victoria in 1801. It also contains other features of historical and environmental interest. If time allows we will visit other areas on Phillip Island.

Please be at the Eltham Shire Offices at 8.45 a.m. so we can leave at 9.00. Bring a picnic lunch.

Cost of the bus fare is \$10.00 for adults and \$5.00 for children. There will be an additional entry fee to Churchill Island Reserve of \$1.00 for pensioners and children and \$2.00 for others.

Please book your seat by completing the attached form and returning it with your fare to the November Meeting or the Society's Post Office box. Seats will be allocated in order of receipt of bookings. Members may bring friends with them.

### Christmas Break-Up:

This function on Wednesday, December 9th will follow the same successful formula as in recent years. That is, it will be a buffet dinner with members each bringing a plate to share.

As in past years, Phyllis Macdonald has organized musicians from the Victorian Folk Music Club and also poetry recitations.

Tea and coffee will be provided but bring anything else you would like to drink.

This is a social function intended mainly for members but, of course, members' friends are welcome. Come along at any time from 6.30 p.m. onwards. Venue is the Senior Citizens Hall.



### Twentieth Anniversary Functions:

The functions held on October 10th were attended by a large number of Society Members and guests, including Councillors and former members.

Joh Ebeli unveiled the plaque at the Society's monument at the Eltham Community Centre. The plaque was Joh's idea and he provided the impetus for its completion. A most fitting description of the project was delivered by Joh and is repeated below (slightly edited to cope with the change from the spoken to the printed word).

The unveiling was followed by a successful afternoon tea and display of historical photos of different areas of the Shire of Eltham.

A team of members led by Blanche Shallard catered for this in fine style and they are thanked for their efforts.

The get together with past members and friends of the Society was most enjoyable.

"We are here to finalise this monument by unveiling a plaque which explains the functions of the items used for the adjacent monument.

I have brought six different people here and have asked them "What do you think of this monument" No one could tell me - some thought it was a sort of modern decoration, so I felt there and then that we still had to do more to make this monument understood and most of all, appreciated.

Therefore, we need to know a bit of the history of the wheel, the subject cart wheel has certainly a magnificent history for us all! Where should we be without the invention of the wheel!

Making a spoked wheel calls for a sort of genius for it's structure is a great deal more complex than might be imagined.

There is a scribe in Irac nearly 6000 years ago which showed a wheeled cart. This was the earliest surviving evidence - the transport breakthrough that helped man to advance into civilisation. The wheels of this cart were not the crude unevenly rounded slices of tree trunk that might be imagined. They were made from three planks joined by cross struts to form a circle. The middle piece being bored centrally to hold the axle end. A wheelwright had been at work and a new craft was born!

Then came the time that allowed the wheel to turn freely instead of the former method of fixing the wheels to an axle that revolved through two hoops slung under the wagon.

In Egypt around 1750 B.C. a light battle-chariot was used for hunting lions and other animals. In Tutankhamen's tomb a casket was found from the 15th or 14th century B.C. bears a marvellous painting of several chariots. Interestingly, the wheels have only 6 spokes.

Since the Middle Ages at least, it has been customary to fit 12 spokes - to heavier wheels 14 and sometimes 16. Around 1500 B.C. the rims of wheels began to be fitted with metal bands of tyres. This was a great improvement upon the earlier practice of binding them with leather which must have had a very short life on the uneven tracks and roads of the time. I myself, got a buggy and fitted on the 2 wheels are solid rubber tyres.

Well, I can carry-on a long time on my hobby subject but to come back to our monument .....



The large iron disc was a platform used for fitting iron tyres to wooden spoked cart wheels (like the one on top of the platform) The local blacksmith and wheelwright used to work side by side. The wheel was clamped to this platform, this held the naff (or hub) tightly and the spokes at a constant angle.

A fire was next to it. A iron hoop or tyre previously forged to the correct size was dropped in the fire - when this tyre was red-hot the blacksmith lifted this with tongs over the outside of the wooden rim. The men hammered the hoop down amid flames from the scorching timber. Then the wheelwright drenched the tyre with cold water as soon as it was in position.

As the tyre cooled an even pressure from the contracting tyre tightened the joints at each end of the spokes and formed a vice-like grip which would last for the life of the wheel.

As you can see, it calls for a sort of genius and, talking about geniuses, we have two here in the gathering. Firstly, the Society wants to thank Bob McLellan and his sons of Charmac here in Bridge Street for their donation of a beautiful plaque. He made it exactly as my design was, including the illustration and logo. Next the second genius, Mr. Graham Beyer of Package Handling. He also made and donated this solid super special construction for us and we also are very grateful to him for doing this.

All I want to say is may this monument be helpful to students of the High School for making their essays about the history of the wheel and also to keep our monument alive

Thanks for listening to me - it was only a "blast from the past!"

Herewith I then unveil this plaque and may this be here shining in the sun in the year 2037!"

#### Other Brief Items.

The September meeting was held at Judge Book Memorial Village and was well attended, especially by members from the Village. Bruce Bence's talk on local bushfire history was well received.

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A small group of members has now had two meetings with artist Maggie Fooke as part of the Shire sponsored bronze sculpture project. After long deliberation and with some misgivings about this project, a decision was reached on the subject of the "sculpture".

The suggestion that we produce a casting of a pot-hole was originally made with tongue in cheek but was eventually adopted. The next step will be to find a suitable pothole for Maggie to make a mould from.

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Arrangements are proceeding for our Australian Bi-Centennial Project which is an exhibition of Walter Withers paintings and memorabilia, to be held in April 1988.

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A letter has been received from local Member of Parliament, Pauline Toner, commending the Eltham Copper Butterfly Appeal. This is an appeal for funds to augment those provided by the Council and Government, for purchase of land to save the habitat of this rare butterfly. Donations are tax deductible and may be left at the ANZ Bank, Main Road, Eltham.

Sue Law,  
President.  
439-9520

Russell Yeoman,  
Secretary.  
439-9717

Opal Smith,  
Treasurer/Membership Secretary.  
439-8209