



Shire of Eltham Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

NO. 59

MARCH, 1988

P.O. BOX 137 ELTHAM VICTORIA 3095

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

8 PM WEDNESDAY 9 MARCH, 1988

ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZENS' CENTRE

MAIN ROAD, ELTHAM

(ENTER FROM SHIRE OFFICE DRIVEWAY)

SPEAKER-ANDREW LEMON

SUBJECT:- RESEARCHING THE WRECK OF

"THE CATARAQUI"

WORKSHOP MEETING

8 PM WEDNESDAY 23 MARCH, 1988

"YEOMAN HOUSE"-7 PETER STREET, ELTHAM

BICENTENNIAL/HERITAGE WEEK DISPLAY

17TH-22ND APRIL, 1988

ELTHAM SHIRE OFFICE

"THE ELTHAM TRADITION"

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of 1987 Annual General Meeting
3. Annual Reports:
 - a. President's Report
 - b. Secretary's Report
 - c. Treasurer's Report
 - d. Other Reports.
4. Election of Office Bearers 1987. All office bearers retire and are eligible for re-election. Nominations for all positions may be submitted in writing to the Secretary prior to the Meeting or will be accepted at the Meeting:

President
Vice Presidents (2)
Secretary
Membership Secretary/
Treasurer
Committee Members (4)
5. Fixing of Annual Subscription
6. Any other business which may be considered by the Annual General Meeting.

(Details of any business should be supplied in writing to the Secretary prior to the meeting).

ANDREW LEMON:

In the bicentenary year it is appropriate that we are being reminded of the importance of the sea and shipping in the making of Australia.

Andrew Lemon, a member of the Society, is co-author with Majorie Morgan of the book "Poor Souls, They Perished - The Cataraqui, Australia's Worst Shipwreck", published in 1986. The Cataraqui was wrecked with the loss of 400 lives on King Island in Bass Strait in August 1845. The book traces the identity of those who were on board, and the extraordinary sequence of events leading up to the voyage. Only nine people survived the wreck, and the story of their rescue is equally remarkable. Andrew will speak on the difficulties of researching such an event, and on the importance of turning to the original evidence.,

Andrew is also involved in the committee set up for the Research Primary School Centenary celebrations in 1989, and will briefly discuss plans and activities to date.

He is a freelance historian, author of local histories on Box Hill, Broadmeadows and Northcote. His main project at present is the History of Australian Thoroughbred Racing, for the Victoria Racing Club.

ELTHAM ENGLAND

Following recent contacts with the Eltham Society in Eltham, just outside London, a letter has been received which deals with a number of interesting points. The letter is repeated below and we look forward to further developments.

"Dear Australian Friends,

I thought you would like to know in advance what is happening here for your national bi-centennial.

Yesterday and today the Eltham, England, churchyard was visited by Burnum Burnum of the Wurundjeri tribe, which, I understand originated in your Eltham area. Yesterday a recording was made by BBC Radio and today Australian Channel 10 T.V. and Radio were much in evidence.. I don't know when it will be shown...but watch for it, and listen for it. Burnum Burnum now lives in Sydney. He had come to demand the return of the remains of Yemmer-rawanyea Kebbarrah, the aborigine who, with Bennelong, came to Britain with the returning 'First Fleet' and died here after a six month stay. My voice and (I regret) my face may appear too as I argue that the exact grave site is unknown and that Yemmerrawanyea's dust or bones should be allowed to rest in peace as they have since 1794, honoured, in a sacred place. I have made an alternative proposal of a travelling scholarship for Aborigine Youth. It must be the first time for many a year that the sound of a didgeridoo being played has been heard inside Eltham Church, England.

The Historical Society may expect a gift parcel from us (the Eltham Society) probably in March. We have ready a gavel and stand for your Chairperson to use for the next two centuries perhaps. It has been made from lime wood from a tree in the Eltham town centre which fell in our Great Gale of October 16th 1987. With it we plan to put a set of slides with a matching script or cassette tape showing our old Eltham to you all. You may feel like booking a hall in the area for a meeting to show these in public. I hope you will kindly arrange to show them in the local primary schools. We cannot afford sets of slides for each. It is important that Kangaroo Ground and Eltham Primaries are involved as they are involved in a letter-swap with British schools in this area.

The first batch of letters to Kangaroo Ground Primary from Horn Park Juniors is ready. I will send it air-mail but the rest will have to come 'surface' as post is pricey. We hope to send a 'tape' of children's songs, etc. too. Do you know a song which goes "Say g'day you Aussie children, Say g'day you Aussie kids"? I have heard it on a tape belonging to a friend in Brisbane but have no copy. It is a good 'multicultural' item which I'd like my pupils to hear. We are greatly looking forward to hearing from you.

Our school term began on January 4th. It is chilly and very damp here now but we have had no snow this winter in southern England ... yet.

We have a large picture-map of Australia at the front of the school hall with an Australian flag to its left and an aborigine flag to its right.

The BBC has broadcast three children's religious services with a serial story about some settlers near Melbourne...so, of course, we all listened. Many children joined in a colouring competition to match. We have a little Australia display at the top of our main stairs ... including one little boy's toy 'platypus', a toy koala and a little swagman which was a present to me from a former teacher at the school who is now an Australian. One of the 4th year classes (10-11 year olds) has been to the Commonwealth Institute which is a splendid Museum in London featuring all our family of nations.

Hasty greetings to three groups...please help each other.

Margaret Taylor
Chairman,
Eltham Society."

BICENTENNIAL/HERITAGE WEEK DISPLAY

As its major Bicentennial effort and to coincide with Heritage Week, the Society is to organize a display at the Eltham Shire Offices. The title is "The Eltham Tradition" - a display honouring people who have helped create the special character of Eltham. It is proposed to be open from Sunday April 17th to Sunday, April 24th. Hours of opening will generally be Shire Office hours except at weekends which will be 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Saturday and 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. on Sundays.

A sub-committee has been formed to organize this display. Any member who feels that they may have something useful to contribute is invited to nominate.

Assistance will be required for supervising the display. Members will be contacted to arrange a roster but if you wish to volunteer for a particular time, please let Opal Smith know. In keeping with the occasion of the Bicentenary, it is intended that this display be of a high standard. Anyone with access to display aids including show cases and display boards is invited to contact Russell Yeoman.

RECORDS/RESEARCH WORKSHOPS

Over the past few years these monthly workshops have been useful in whittling away the long job of getting Society records into some sort of order. The last few have been poorly attended. It has now been decided to continue the programme but to reduce the number and to have each concentrate on a specific topic. Workshops will now be held two weeks after each Society Meeting, i.e. generally each two months.

The first will follow the theme of the proposed Bicentennial display and work on records of people important to the history of the Shire. Members wishing to help with collating information, carrying out research on this subject, or who may have something to offer for the Society's records, are invited to attend.

SOCIETY PROGRAMME:

As in recent years a programme of Society events for the year has been prepared and is circulated with this Newsletter. It is provided as a guide on the basis that any changes will be notified through forthcoming Newsletters.

FEBRUARY MEETING:

The first meeting of the year was mainly devoted to videos of local interest including the new Shire of Eltham publicity video. The discussion section of the evening covered a variety of interesting topics. Dorita Thomson prepared a short statement on what the Bicentennial means to her and it is worth repeating here:

"A visit to Sydney for the Australia Day weekend gave me time to contemplate what the Bicentennial celebrations meant to me. It was a wonderful experience, one I would not have missed for worlds, celebrating two hundred years of white settlement. I use the word 'celebrate' in the sense of 'honouring' our forefathers who came from thousands of miles to pioneer this country and make it the place it is today. My forebears, like most other people's, were simple folk. They came as 'free' settlers for varying reasons - depression after the Napoleonic wars, some were starved out, others forcibly removed from land their families had lived on for centuries. They came in search of a better life. Some came for gold. They endured great hardships, they suffered, and in many cases they themselves did not reap the reward of their labours, but a later generation did. My family have contributed to local government, science, music, journalism, education, mining, agriculture and human rights.

Several years ago when the Historical Society had a stand in the Arts Centre featuring some of the men of Eltham who had made contributions to the wider community, I asked, "Why no women?" The reply was, "women were tied to the washtub". It gave me food for thought. I refuse to accept that theirs was an unimportant contribution. My children are the fifth generation to grow up in a one parent family and I, in this year of celebration, wish to pay tribute to that long line of gallant and independent women who battled against severe odds to rear their children with little money and no help from government handouts...

I would like to see an invitation extended to record the family histories of some of the people in this community. They are not commonplace, they are not unimportant, and if it is not done now, may be lost forever."

The suggestion in the last paragraph is an interesting one and we intend to further pursue it.

Russell Yeoman,
Secretary.
439-9717.

Sue Law,
President.
439-9520.

Opal Smith,
Treasurer/Membership Secretary.
439-8209.