



# Shire of Eltham Historical Society

INCORPORATED

P.O. BOX 137 ELTHAM VICTORIA 3095

## NEWSLETTER

NO. 73 JULY, 1990

### NEXT MEETING

8PM WEDNESDAY ,11 JULY 1990

ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZEN'S CENTRE

MAIN ROAD ELTHAM

(ENTER FROM SHIRE OFFICE DRIVEWAY)

GUEST SPEAKER: ANDREW MACKENZIE

SLIDE PRESENTATION :

THE ART OF FREDERICK McCUBBIN

Andrew Mackenzie is an art historian and author who is now well known to many Society members. His book "Walter Withers - The Forgotten Manuscripts" has created considerable local interest.

Andrew's most recent project has been a book to be released in about a month and titled "Frederick McCubbin 1855 - 1917 - The Proff and His Art". McCubbin was, of course, a leading member of the Heidelberg School of painters and one of the foremost Australian artists of his time. He was a great friend of Walter Withers and his family during their time at Eltham.

Andrew's presentation will consist of about forty or fifty slides of McCubbin's works, many of which have not been previously shown at a public viewing. His commentary will include social history aspects of the paintings, including details of the subjects and locations.

This will be an important presentation which should provide a new dimension to McCubbin's works. As usual, visitors and new members are most welcome.

### KANGAROO GROUND SCHOOL HOUSE

The teacher's residence at the Kangaroo Ground School is no longer required for that purpose and future options are currently under examination. One possibility is that this Society use the building as a museum and/or meeting place. Discussions are at a very early stage and members will be consulted before any final decisions are made. It is proposed that the matter be discussed at a special committee meeting in the near future. Details will be announced at the July meeting. Alternatively, anyone wishing to have an input now or attend the Committee meeting should contact a committee member.

## WALTER WITHERS PLAQUE PROJECT

We started off this project as a Bicentennial activity in 1988. The proposal is to locate a plaque in the Walter Withers' Reserve (corner of Bible and Arthur Streets, Eltham) to commemorate Withers.

Eltham has a long history as the home of artists. Walter Withers (1854 - 1914) was one of the earliest and most famous of them. He moved from Heidelberg to Eltham in 1903 when the newly constructed railway made possible access to Melbourne for his painting classes. Earlier he had formed an association with artists who made up the renowned Heidelberg School.

He remained at Eltham until his death and is buried at nearby St Helena. Many of his important works were painted during these later years. His works are displayed in many art galleries. There are important collections at the National Gallery of Victoria and the Geelong Art Gallery.

Withers' Eltham house remains at the corner of Brougham and Bolton Streets and the reserve does commemorate his name. However, it was thought by the Society that further recognition in Eltham was warranted and this plaque project was initiated. The plaque was designed by member Joh Ebeli and manufactured free of cost to the Society by Charmac Industries of Eltham. We have now had this for some time but the problem has been to find an appropriate means of mounting it. The problem has now been solved by the purchase of a 30 tonne boulder which now sits in the reserve. Funds for its purchase were provided by a community service grant from the Shire of Eltham, donations from Andrew Mackenzie and John Withers and Society funds. Preparations for the mounting of the plaque are now being carried out by Graham Beyer of Package Handling Equipment of Thomastown.

Whilst this project has taken longer than anticipated, the time taken to find the boulder is considered well spent. There will now be a fitting Eltham memorial to this famous artist. Thanks are due to Bob McLellan of Charmac and to all others listed above for their help. We also thank the staff of the Shire's Parks and Environment Section for their advice and assistance.

A date for unveiling of the plaque will be set in the near future and invitations will be sent to members.

## SHIRE CONSERVATION STRATEGY

The Shire of Eltham has recently employed Mr Pat Vaughan as its Environmental Officer. The major initial task for Pat is to prepare a Conservation Strategy for the protection and enhancement of the natural and cultural heritage of the Shire. Community input to the strategy is to be achieved through a number of working groups, each covering its own general topic. Membership of the following groups is now being sought:

1. Community education and involvement;
2. The natural environment;
3. The urban environment;
4. The rural environment;
5. Heritage and landscape;
6. Pollution, wastes and resource conservation;
7. Recreation and tourism.

Any member interested in participating should contact Pat on 430-1122 or Russell Yeoman. The heritage and landscape group is likely to be of greatest interest to members but some may have expertise or interest in the other groups.

An associated but separate initiative is a Heritage Study which will be carried out by the Shire with the aid of a \$10,000 National Estate grant. Details of the study are yet to be announced.

## RECENT ACTIVITIES

At our May meeting Jack Hodson entertained members with many anecdotes of times spent searching for gold and buried relics. He brought with him a large collection of items that he has found and these attracted a great deal of attention after the meeting.

A group of about twenty members and friends spent an interesting day exploring local cemeteries on May 27. In each case we were introduced to the cemetery with a brief talk. At Eltham, Frank Burgoyne gave us the benefit of his knowledge as a member of the cemetery trust and at Kangaroo Ground, Bruce Ness spoke in a similar capacity. The lunch stop was at Hurstbridge where we visited the Hurst family graves. The President of Nillumbik Historical Society, Jock Ryan, joined us at the Nillumbik (Diamond Creek) cemetery. He travelled on to St Katherines, St Helena, where he talked on the history of the church and cemetery.

Thanks are due to all of these people for helping with another successful Society excursion.

Sue Law  
President  
439-9520

Russell Yeoman  
Secretary  
439-9717

Opal Smith  
Treasurer/Membership Secretary  
439-8209

