



## **NEWSLETTER**

**NO. 87 NOVEMBER, 1992**

# Shire of Eltham Historical Society

INCORPORATED

P.O. BOX 137 ELTHAM VICTORIA 3095

### **NEXT MEETING**

**8 P.M. WEDNESDAY, 11 NOVEMBER, 1992**

**ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZENS' CENTRE**

**MAIN ROAD, ELTHAM**

**(ENTER FROM SHIRE OFFICE DRIVEWAY)**

**SUBJECT: FAMILY HISTORY PROJECT**

### **CHRISTMAS FUNCTION**

**6.30 PM WEDNESDAY 9 DECEMBER 1992**

**ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZENS' CENTRE**

**COST \$7.50**

### **NOVEMBER MEETING:**

Over the past two years Blanche Shallard has been quietly urging members of local families to place their family history on the record. The result has been a collection of about twenty quite diverse stories. Some have already been the subject of articles in our Newsletter. The theme for this meeting has been selected to introduce members to a further group of these families.

Two of the Society's more articulate talkers, Harry Gilham and Peter Bassett-Smith have each selected a small group of histories to discuss. How they will deal with them is up to themselves. They may have selected readings interspersed with informal discussion. They may add to the written histories from their own extensive knowledge of local history. Apart from the selected items it is proposed to have the complete collection at the meeting for discussion or perusal by members.

This will be an informal evening with a rather flexible agenda. We could even cope with some new family histories if they turn up on the night.

### **CHRISTMAS BREAKUP:**

The format for this function will be similar to our successful breakup last year. That is it will consist of a dinner and a showing of members efforts for the year's photo project.

The dinner will be baked potatoes with a variety of delicious fillings and desserts and tea and coffee. To cover the cost of these there will be a charge of \$7.50. Drinks will again be arranged by our resident wine expert Harry Gilham.

For catering purposes we need to know the numbers attending. Please advise Gwen Orford at the November meeting or by phone.

The display of photos has been extended to include any other documents which may be of interest to members. For instance, Harry Gilham intends to bring a 1740 English land sale document associated with his family. Photos may include those taken of the local area or events during the year or older photos which have not been displayed previously. Photos or other documents should be in a form suitable for display. Mounted on a display board or in an album would be ideal.

### **ANDREW ROSS SCHOOLHOUSE MUSEUM**

In our last newsletter we mentioned a proposed Community Awareness Day at the museum in November. There have been some difficulties with arrangements for this open day. The museum sub-committee still needs to decide whether we can go ahead in November or wait till next year. If a November date can be arranged then it will be announced at the November meeting and separate advice will be sent to members.

### **JOYCE McMAHON:**

Sadly we must report the recent death of long time member Joyce McMahon following an accident. Joyce's association with the area began when as a small girl she came with her family to their new home in Sherbourne Road. Later she became the first secretary at the Eltham Shire Offices at Kangaroo Ground. Each day she rode her horse from her home in Montmorency. Joyce's husband, the late Frank McMahon, was the son of the Shire Secretary at that time.

Our sympathy is extended to Joyce's family.

### **OTHER SOCIETY NEWS:**

Although we did not have a full bus load for our Maryborough trip there were enough members and friends to cover the cost and make it a worthwhile day. Local historians Bruce and Betty Osborne showed us the sights and historical features of the town including the enormous old railway station. They cleverly navigated the bus to a rather tricky spot in nearby bushland to visit some Aboriginal wells. This was a somewhat longer trip than usual but most found it quite enjoyable.

At our September meeting Isabel Ellender spoke about her archaeological study of Aboriginal heritage of the Shire of Eltham which is now in its final stages. A major purpose of the study is to identify Aboriginal sites to be protected. It will also be a useful resource document for historians, students, etc.

From time to time people express an interest in the Society and are added to our mailing list. Sometimes we don't hear further from these people. Sometimes unfortunately and for various reasons members lose interest in the Society. We are largely quite flexible in maintaining our mailing list but occasionally we must delete people that we have not heard from for some time. A review of the list is currently in progress with a view to deleting those people who have not paid a subscription for 1992. If you are not sure of your financial status check with Gwen Orford. Alternatively, if you know you have not paid then now is a good time to do it.

#### CHRISTMAS HILLS:

The residents of Christmas Hills celebrated their 150th Anniversary on 10th and 11th October with two days of local events. They included a "Back to School" which attracted a large number of people. Historical displays were organized by our Society, Yarra Glen Historical Society and there was also a collection of local photos and documents arranged by Mick Woiwod.

A significant part of the celebrations was the unveiling of a plaque in memory of David Christmas whose name is now commemorated by the district name. David was a Welshman who was transported to Van Diemen's Land for theft. After being granted a pardon he came to Melbourne and in 1842 was employed as a shepherd by squatter Joseph Stevenson. David became lost for seven days on his way to Stevenson's Watsons Creek run. By chance he found Stevenson's cattle and was rescued by remaining with them.

The plaque is located in One Tree Hill Road near the Watons Creek bridge. Local legend has it that David Christmas is buried near here.

A major feature of the celebrations was the launching of Mick Woiwod's history of the area called "Once Around the Sugarloaf". "The Sugarloaf", also known as Mt Graham, is a prominent topographical feature of the area and today is also the name of the reservoir which has covered a large part of the district. The book is an excellently produced and clearly written account of history of the area up to recent times. It contains about 300 pages and sells for \$29.50. A brochure about the book is enclosed. It will be available from Mick Woiwod.

#### ELTHAM COMMUNITY FESTIVAL:

As previously reported we are not proposing to enter a float in the Festival parade this year. Our contribution to the Festival will be the production of a brochure called "Eltham Discovery Walk" which will provide information for a series of self guided walks. The main purpose of the brochure is for distribution on the steam train coming to Eltham on Sunday 15th November. It will also be available at other Festival locations. We hope to include walks covering the natural environment, typical Eltham housing areas as well as important heritage locations.

Russell Yeoman  
Secretary  
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Sue Law  
President  
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Treasurer  
439-8642



# Once around the Sugarloaf

Mick Woiwod

Once around the Sugarloaf is a story dealing in depth with all the many past worlds of Christmas Hills. The Aborigines - their lifestyles and culture - the way they saw their country and the coming to it of the white race? The first squatters, Ryrie, Stevenson, Murray and Watson. What sort of men were they really, and how did they treat the Aborigines? David Christmas! Did he really exist? - What was his connection with gold? The diggers! Who were they and why was their role so central to the story of the hills.

Throughout, the emphasis is on the land. The way it was formed; how it was cleared and cropped, and the extent it determined the destiny of those who set out to master it. Originally the district was known simply as the Stringybark Forest. Then, in 1865, it was thrown open to selectors. About a hundred families took up land and spent the rest of their days trying to come to terms with it. Who were they? How successful were they? Discover the story of the particular piece of land you now live on - the story of the people who farmed it a century ago.

Once around the Sugarloaf there existed a world which was in many ways a microcosm of the wider Australian world of the nineteenth century, peopled by a diverse range of interesting characters, all of whom in some way or other left their mark upon it.

The book, Once Around the Sugarloaf, is a 300 page volume containing some ninety quality photos, maps and illustrations, and a fully referenced text derived mainly from primary sources. It sells at twenty-nine dollars fifty and can be purchased at the Launch or by contacting Mick Woiwod, 64 Gongflers Drive Christmas Hills, on 7120563, or by writing direct to that address c/o Kangaroo Ground Post Office 3097.