

Shire of Eltham
Historical Society

Incorporated

P O Box 137, Eltham, Victoria 3095

NEWSLETTER

No.97 JULY, 1994

NEXT MEETING

8 P.M. WEDNESDAY, 13 JULY, 1994

ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZENS' CENTRE

MAIN ROAD, ELTHAM

(ENTER FROM SHIRE OFFICE DRIVEWAY)

SUBJECT: MAIN ROAD, ELTHAM

"FILLING IN THE MAP"



Corner of Main Road and Pryor Street Eltham
Can we tell from the photo if this was in the 1920's or 30's.

JULY MEETING:

Over many years we have heard speakers at our meetings and members at discussion evenings talk about various aspects of the history of the Eltham Town Centre and various other premises along Main Road. However, there is no comprehensive recorded attempt to properly document the locations of the various businesses or their life span. So, with a few aids to our memory that is what we hope to do at this meeting. With Harry Gilham conducting the proceedings we intend to discuss the matter and record our findings on specially prepared maps and in other appropriate ways. We hope to have some of our members with long memories to provide some of the information. Members are also invited to bring along any friends they think can contribute to the discussion.

As aids to our discussion we will have photos from the library and society collections, plans of subdivision and maps and some written information.

This is a type of group therapy historical research which we have not tried before. We hope that it will lead to a successful result and if so we could try it on other subjects. Whatever the outcome we think it will be an interesting meeting.



Extract from 1920s Council map.

THE SHIRE OF ELTHAM 1871-1994?

The State Government, through its Local Government Board is currently carrying out a major restructuring of local government throughout Victoria. Recently a number of inner suburban municipalities have been amalgamated with their neighbours to form much larger local government units. Similar exercises have been done at Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and in the Western District. Currently, the Board is conducting an enquiry into outer suburban councils including Eltham and its neighbours. As a result of this the Shire of Eltham as we know it is likely to disappear in name, size and shape. Whether the restructuring will be major or minor remains to be seen. The chances of it being implemented before the end of 1994 are quite high.

The likely scenario is some form of amalgamation of the whole or parts of Eltham with the whole or parts of Diamond Valley and/or Heidelberg. Eltham's preferred position is for all of its area to be included in a new municipality based on an "eco-corridor" (ecologically and economically based)

This would include the less urban parts of Diamond Valley and possibly some of the rural parts of the City of Whittlesea east of the Plenty River.

The Society's committee has considered a Shire questionnaire on the matter. We have responded by saying that we do not see significant benefits in major changes to the Shire. However, given the inevitability of change we generally agree with Council's position of an environmentally based municipality.

The proposed changes have some consequences for our Society. Historical societies need to maintain a good relationship with Councils for reasons of funding and other support. In addition, if there is no Shire of Eltham then our name becomes rather redundant. Experience with the inner suburban area indicates that former council names are unlikely to be retained. Do we become an Eltham society? Do we combine with other societies within our expanded municipality? Or What? These are questions we will need to answer in the near future.

The question of recording the history of the Shire and the preservation of important records and other items also needs consideration.

To celebrate 123 years of the Shire, Russell Yeoman plans to conduct a walk from the southern boundary (the Yarra River at Eltham) to the northern boundary (the Great Dividing Range at Kinglake). This will be a two day walk on Saturday and Sunday, 10th and 11th September. It will involve about 20 km walking each day so it is restricted to fit, experienced walkers. The route will mainly follow the proposed Eltham Horse Trail. Transport back to the start each day will be arranged (so you don't have to carry your accommodation). The walk is part of the Shire's Living and Learning Centres programme. Contact either the Panton Hill or Eltham Centres if you are interested.



DRAPERY STORE, ELTHAM.

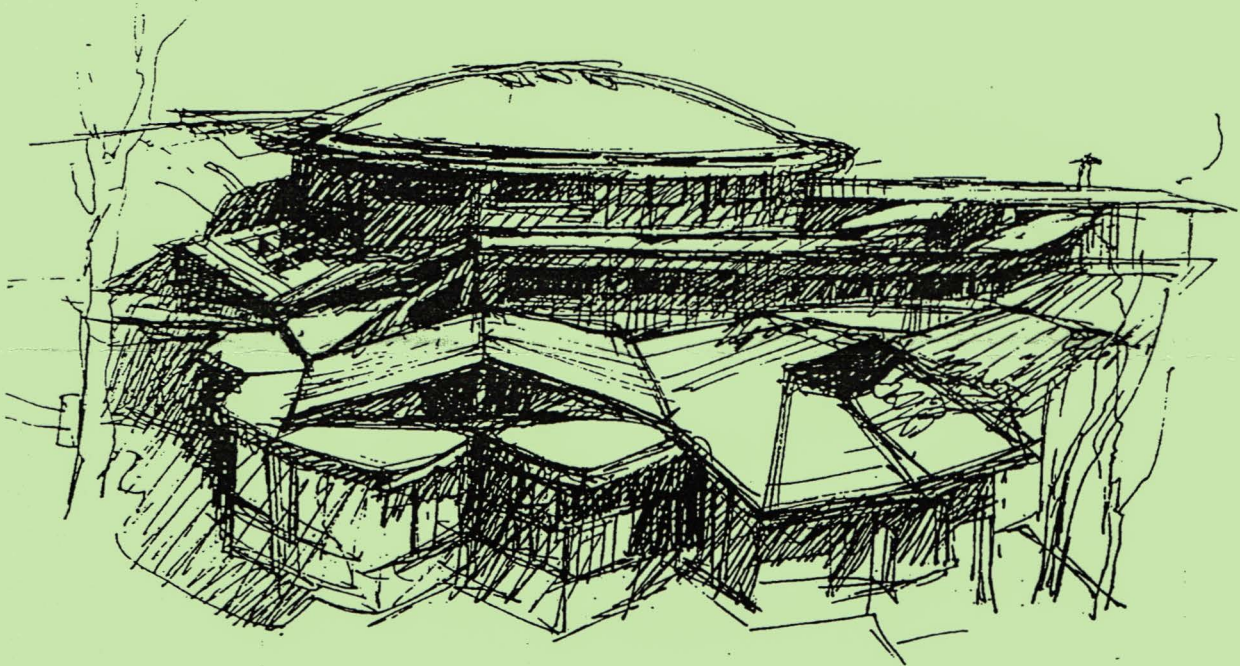
THE NEW ELTHAM LIBRARY:

The new library in Panther Place provides a major contribution to Eltham both as a significant building and in the service it will provide to residents. It was officially opened by Cr. Bob Manuell on 22nd May and its popularity is attested by its constant heavy use since then.

The external appearance is striking and it is certain to become a landmark feature. It is not to everyone's taste. Some people think that the roof line and architectural detail is too "busy". However, we have heard nothing but favourable comments on the interior. These range from the architectural detail, to the splendid spaces available for library and exhibition use, to the changing views from the windows around the building.

The local history collection has been upgraded from its former filing cabinet to a glass fronted bookcase and will be far more usable. The bookcase has room for display material. We are currently running a display on the history of the library site and especially its relationship with the (very) nearby Shillinglaw Cottage. Also in this area of the library are paintings from the Shire's collection with heritage subjects.

A visit to the library is recommended for those who have not yet been - it is worth it as a sight seeing tour alone.



THE WARRANDYTE MYSTERY TOUR MAY 29TH 1994

by Bettina Woodburn

Members of the Eltham Historical Society met at the Old Post Office, now converted into the Warrandyte Historical Museum, for a picnic lunch on the sunny back verandah overlooking the shimmering Yarra River. Interesting photographs and artefacts filled various rooms outlining the history of this area, and told tales of Aboriginal and more recent neighbours of the Eltham Shire.

The weather was calm, cloudy mostly with only occasional sunny patches, but it wasn't cold, although the autumnal leaf colours had changed to wintry brown.

"All Aboard" and we set off in the Warrandyte Community Bus (with the School Bus sign displayed at the rear) to learn about local places of "Pride and Joy" from Bruce our guide and Tom the driver.

Almost directly opposite we entered Whipstick Gully to explore the first of the district's hidden treasures - the Victory, one of the largest of the six or so major mines, past the old quarry now used for abseiling practice. By torchlight we entered the rocky hillside and saw the seams of quartz the miners had followed in their search for gold. Stamping batteries, and there was one in this gully, converted discarded rock into 'road metal'. Warrandyte is proud to be the first declared Goldfield in 1851, and one of the longest surviving, into the 1920's.

A pleasant drive across the Bridge and along Bradley's Lane to Norman's Reserve brought us to see another Tunnel at Pound Bend through which the Yarra was diverted to allow about three miles of river-bed to be used for prospecting for alluvial gold.

Still on this side of the river we visited the Old Slab Hut in Castles Road. This remnant of miners' housing is preserved because it had been incorporated into a weatherboard house, and saved from the bulldozers - a last minute reprieve, for preservation, by the National Trust. Devastating bush fires have destroyed other old cottages built of wattle and daub, with bark roofs and stone fire-places.

The Cairn commemorating the disclosure of Gold Discovery at Warrandyte on June 30th 1851 beside Anderson's Creek Road was our next point of historical interest. We drove on to South Warrandyte and circled back to above the Ford on Anderson's Creek to the entrance of the 4th Hill Mine. Again we crept along with our torches, careful of the low roof-rock, and side shafts. At a junction in a large cavity we were able to stand, look up a long air-vent which some 'cavers' climb down, and marvel at, and experience an aspect of a miner's life.

Outside we heard the same bird songs, the trills and bell-pealing, saw the same straggly eucalypts, and a silver leaved wattle in flower, native grasses and ferns, and the neat present day houses, often of Warrandyte stone, perhaps veneered only.

The day ended pleasantly, seeing more of the Yarra from Everard Drive, and the water rushing out of the Tunnel at Pound Bend, before returning to afternoon tea or coffee at the Museum.

A great day for all concerned - many thanks to the Organisers.

SHOULD WE DO SOME FORWARD PLANNING ON THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE?

by Harry Gilham

In the terms of a re-worded proverb

'the Society's activities need to be continually nourished with activities that involve members in their own time away from our meetings and tours'

In 1971 the Pioneers and Painters book edited by Alan Marshall recognised in part, some of Eltham Shire's history in its first century of achievements. With another 25 years activities as a focal point by 1996 we could contribute in what I would see as two approaches to continue to "fill out" the community involvement of the Shire's history:

- by adding to the achievements and visual records in the book to show their continuing progress or demise since 1971;
- by introducing the 'newer' resources of the community and achievements that have continued the Eltham Way of living, e.g.; bike paths, Leisure Centre; Living and Learning Centre, etc;

Projects for Members:

- continue to expand the collection of family letters which Blanche Shallard started up some years ago;
- expand the Eltham Town Libraries synopsis into a booklet form;
- assist and coerce schools in the Shire to write up their own histories; to this could be added the community groups that exist today;
- write up our own Society's history.

The list is endless, things to collect, write about, photograph, make videos, use of the Plenty Valley radio, the Shire's ECHO and so on.

Let us talk about it.

OTHER NEWS:

There is not much news this month from the Andrew Ross Museum but we understand the Board of Management is progressing steadily towards their goal of regular opening. A local gardening group has been formed at Kangaroo Ground and they are going to assist with the Museum garden.

Somewhat later than planned, a final draft of the Shire of Eltham Cultural Heritage Study has been produced by consultant David Bick and his team. This weighty document (about 1200 pages) now needs final checking before submission to the Council for approval. We hope that municipal restructuring does not interfere with the approval process.

Harry Gilham
President
439 1175

Russell Yeoman
Secretary
439 9717

Gwen Orford
Treasurer
439 8642