

**Eltham District
Historical Society
Incorporated**
PO Box 137, Eltham, Victoria 3095

**NEWSLETTER
No. 105 NOVEMBER 1995**

NEXT MEETING

8.00 PM WEDNESDAY 8TH NOVEMBER 1995

ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZENS' CENTRE

MAIN ROAD ELTHAM

(ENTER FROM OLD SHIRE OFFICE DRIVEWAY)

"THE KANGAROO GROUND COLLECTION"

PRESENTED BY BRUCE NIXON

CHRISTMAS FUNCTION

6.30 PM WEDNESDAY 13TH DECEMBER 1995

ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZENS' CENTRE

BUFFET DINNER AND

SCHOOLDAYS MEMORABILIA EVENING

NOVEMBER MEETING

During preparation of Mick Woiwod's book "Kangaroo Ground, The Highland Taken", a number of photos and other pictorial items were collected, borrowed or otherwise acquired by Mick and his team. Bruce Nixon had previously commissioned Mick to produce this book. As a separate exercise Bruce financed a project to provide a copy of all these pictures for the Andrew Ross Museum. The result is "The Kangaroo Ground Collection" - some 540 pictures professionally mounted in folders and fully indexed.

At our November meeting Bruce will introduce us to a representative sample from the collection - we can't hope to get through anything like the 540 items. You can be sure that his selection will include a wide range of interesting subjects.

Bruce Nixon's support of local history includes generous donations of his time and finance. During the time of preparation of the book Bruce agreed to become chairman of the Board of the Museum, a position that he still holds. This meeting will give us the opportunity to express our appreciation to Bruce for his contribution to the preservation of the history of the area.

CHRISTMAS FUNCTION

We have again organized a buffet dinner for our Christmas break-up function on 13th December. A small group of Committee members is currently working on a menu which, we are sure, will result in a delicious meal. As usual, President Harry Gilham is providing a selection of wines, including some of his own distinctive varieties.

After the dinner we will have a display and discussion on school days memorabilia. Members are asked to bring along some item of interest related to their own school days or to one of the local schools.

Harry is going to produce a display based on his extensive research into the history of Eltham Primary School.

Cost of the dinner will be \$10 payable on the night. For catering purposes we need to know how many people are coming. Notify Gwen Orford at the November meeting or ring her on 9439-8642 if you intend to come.

ANDREW ROSS SCHOOLHOUSE MUSEUM

On 14th and 15th October the Museum conducted a fire awareness weekend in conjunction with the Kangaroo Ground Fire Brigade. This event attracted a significant number of local residents and was beneficial for the Museum and the Brigade.

The Museum still requires assistance on Sunday afternoons between 2.00 and 4.00 PM. Anyone able to help on an occasional basis is asked to contact Diana Bassett-Smith on 9712-0668. Even if you only decide the day before that you can help this could be useful.

The Museum Board has arranged for a series of readings from The Reminiscences of Andrew Ross on Plenty Valley Community Radio (FM86.6). Norma Lawler will include a short excerpt from the book each week in her Monday morning programme between 9.00 and 12.00.

EXPLORING THE UPPER YARRA

We enjoyed the Spring Excursion, this year "Exploring the Upper Yarra" - in spite of the constant rain and the countryside under the cloud cover, especially in the valleys, being mainly shiny shades of green. The occasional fields of buttercups, clumps of arum lilies and splendid rhododendron and other flowering bushes became very special.

The Cobb and Co coach was warm and a cosy retreat as we zig-zagged on the highways and byways to glimpse the Yarra River, upstream and down, its secret places, and particularly the many bridges. Russell excelled as 'Poet Laureate', reading from Dacre Smyth's book. This 1979 publication includes paintings of all the bridges along the river with poems and brief descriptions of each one. Some of the bridges are in out of the way places and are not very well known. We looked forward to hearing the poetry as much as seeing the 'constructions' ... Big Pat (was he short or tall, lean or fat? He did win the two hundred pound reward for discovering gold and had the creek named after him), about the 'Eddies'?, and the disliked 'meccano' bridge in Warburton, etc. etc.

The hot roast lunch in the old Reefton Hotel was also most welcome. It was easy to imagine it peopled by miners and early settlers.

Starting by crossing the new (1974) concrete bridge at Warrandyte we headed through Wonga Park with views to the Christmas Hills and to the escarpment of the Yering Gorge, which causes flood waters to back up through the Yarra Glen plain, so avoiding disasters downstream.

At the end of a long driveway we found the wooden, privately owned Henley Bridge (1935 after the 1934 floods). This facilitates access to different parts of Henley Farm and to Lilydale.

Everard Park, named after Blanche Shallard's father, a State Member for 17 years, below the Highway Yarra crossing was in need of care. It is 10 miles from Yarra Glen by road but, as "Yarra Marra" canoeists well know, 32 winding miles down by water. After more delightful countryside scenes we joined the Warburton Highway at Woori Yallock.

From the old Railway Station at Launching Place the Centennial Trail for walkers, cyclists and horse riders has replaced the rails. The line from Lilydale was opened in 1901, and the last diesel freight train ran to Warburton in 1965.

It continued to rain as we had morning tea in Warburton in a shelter between footbridges. From here we continued upstream past the Bridge to O'Shannasy Lodge and Reservoir, Starvation Creek, and the Peninsular tunnel (miners dug it as at Pound Bend) which we visited (scrambling down those steps!) on our return after lunch.

Our furthest point was the Upper Yarra Dam Reserve (and vast catchment area). Finished in 1957 after ten years work and 100 years after Yan Yean, it supplies much of Melbourne's water.

After crossing the 30m Launching Place Bridge to the Eltham side of the Yarra and Healesville, we saw in the distance the Yarra Glen Timber Trestle Bridge over the river flats "the longest for years in the land it was said!"

Harry's dream of "better weather over the Divide" unfortunately didn't come true, but I'm sure we 36 members will retain happy memories of a day that was wet and green and filled with Bridges.

BENJAMIN BAXTER

The Baxter Provender Restaurant at Sages Cottage, Baxter, on the Mornington Peninsula has produced a history sheet which includes a great deal of information on Benjamin Baxter after whom that area is named. This was the same Baxter who in 1840 purchased 950 acres covering much of the present localities of Lower Plenty and Montmorency South. The historical research notes on the Shire of Eltham produced by Keith Chappel deals with Baxter's purchase and includes some information on Baxter. Some of the detail varies from the Sages Cottage information. Chapel's notes are reproduced below. The Sages Cottage notes are included as a separate attachment to the Newsletter.

A Crown land area containing 950 acres was sold on 5 February 1840 at public auction to Benjamin Baxter for an amount of 1448 pounds 15 shillings. It was bounded on the west by the Plenty River, on the south by the freehold of George Porter, etc. and on the east by a line which later became the western boundary of the Eltham Village Reserve. Near the south-western corner of the Baxter land a bridge was built over the Plenty River and from it through his land a meandering 'road' to Falkiner's occupation etc. on the future Village Reserve. That 'road' was near the 'Old Eltham Road' of today.

Benjamin Baxter, a 50th Regiment retired captain, came to Port Phillip in 1838. He lived in a small wooden shanty fronting the Yarra River near William Street; he had a dairy and vegetable garden there and was also postmaster. Another chronicler records that B. Baxter, Clerk of the Bench, was appointed postmaster at 150 pounds a year but Mrs Baxter carried out most of the postal duties.

"She worked in a small cottage on swampy ground covered with teatree near the corner of King Street and Flinders Lane. The small post office was flooded by the Yarra in March 1839 and the postmistress and her children rescued by boat. She contracted such a severe cold that Baxter gave up the position."

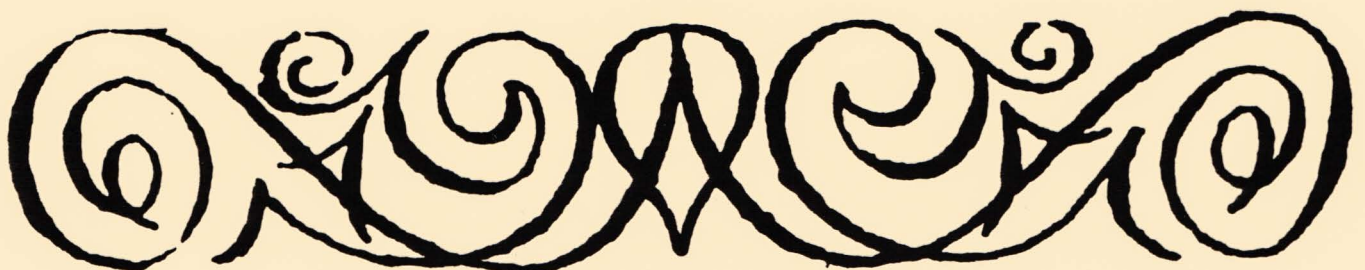
(from W H Newnham's Melbourne, (1956) page 185.)

Officially Benjamin Baxter had a cattle run known as Carrup Carrup (or Baxter's Cattle Station) for the years September 1838 to 1860, situate five miles south of Frankston, estimated to contain approximately 15,360 acres and to have a grazing capacity of 500 head of cattle. In 1842 there were protests against his cattle being allowed on the north of the Yarra near Melbourne on land which was reserved for the town cattle.

Each Melbourne householder was entitled to keep four cows in one of the town herds.

Benjamin Baxter was ordered to remove his cattle from that locality.

Benjamin Baxter born County Cork 1805
Assistant Commissioner of Crown Lands 1851
Died Frankston 15 May 1892.



OTHER NEWS

The former Shire of Diamond Valley produced an Arts Directory each year covering its own area and the Shire of Eltham. This function has now been taken over by Banyule City Council. We have just received the current directory which covers Banyule and Nillumbik. This directory gives details of practitioners and organizations involved in all branches of the arts in the local area and is available for members' reference.

The Eltham Community Festival has passed into history. A festival will be held in Eltham on the weekend of 11th and 12th November but it has been re-named the Nillumbik Festival by the Council. Other areas of the Shire such as Diamond Creek and Hurstbridge have festivals of their own but the Council has apparently decided that Eltham's festival is to be a Shire based event.

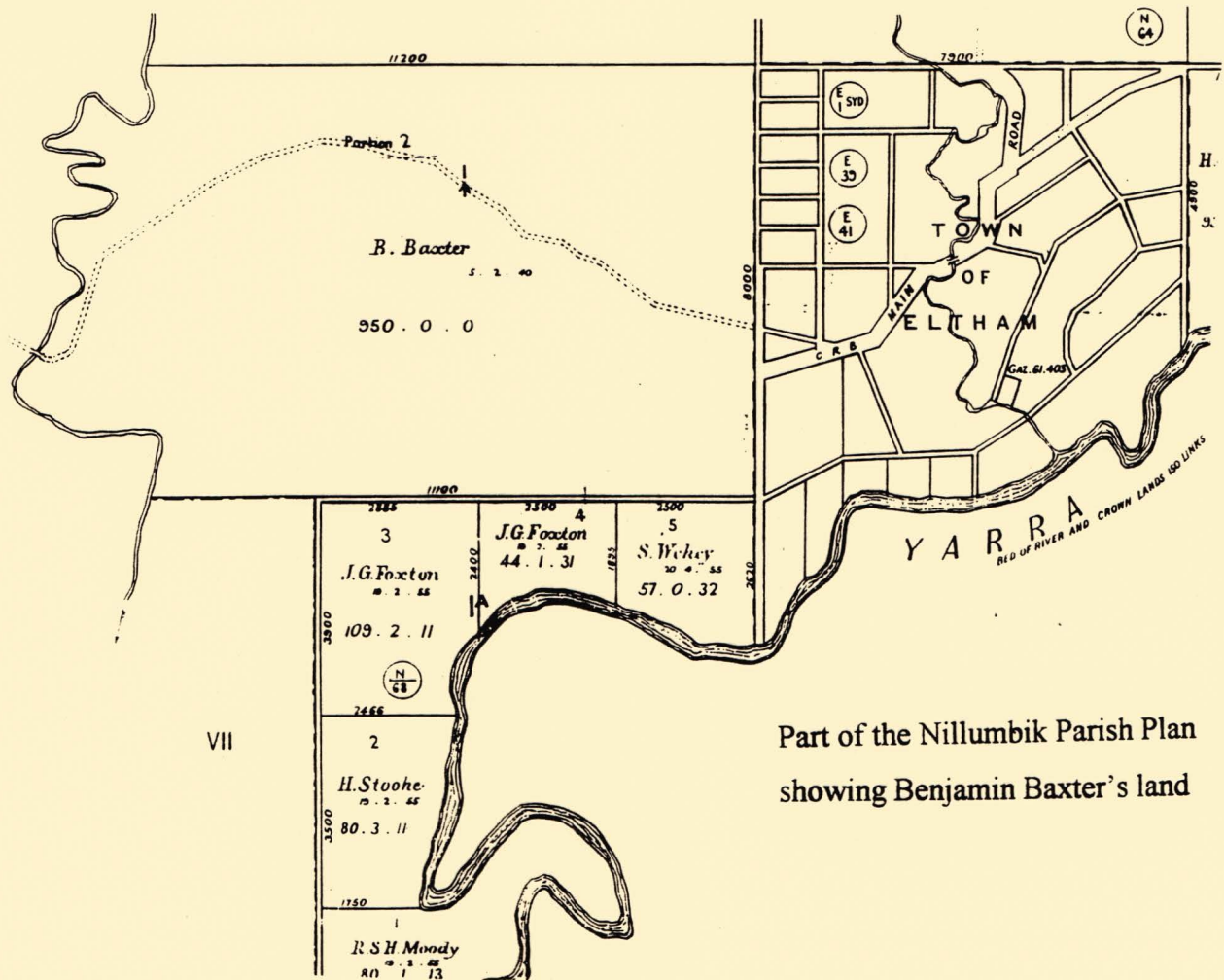
We have not been able to find any members who can co-ordinate Society participation in the festival and so we have no official involvement.

In conjunction with the Nillumbik Living and Learning Centres, Russell Yeoman is conducting an east west walk across the Shire of Nillumbik in November. This will be held over two days on Sunday 19th and Saturday 25th, walking about 20km each day. The first day will cover Christmas Hills to Hurstbridge and the second will be from Plenty Road to Hurstbridge. Each day will involve a transport shuffle by car and/or public transport. Further details will be in the next issue of Nillumbik News. Contact Pat Anderson at the Pantom Hill Centre, 9719-7506 if you are interested.

Harry Gilham
President
Phone 9439 1175

Russell Yeoman
Secretary
9439 9717

Gwen Orford
Treasurer/Membership Secretary
9439 8642



Part of the Nillumbik Parish Plan showing Benjamin Baxter's land



**SAGES COTTAGE GARDENS
BAXTER PROVENDER RESTAURANT**

Sages Road, Baxter 3911.
Melway Map 106 F5
Phone: (059) 71 1337

HISTORY SHEET

The below is a history of the Sage family commissioned by the Victoria Conservation Trust

Sage's Cottage was built by John Edward Sage as the homestead on his farm, "Eurutta", for which he obtained a Crown Grant in 1856. It was previously part of the Carrup Carrup cattle station for which his father-in-law, Benjamin Baxter, had held a depasturing licence since 1840. Sage drove a mob of cattle from Sydney to Melbourne for Baxter in the same year and became his first manager. He had arrived in Sydney as a boy of 13 in the "Emma Eugenia" of 383 tons in May, 1835. It was intended that, after further schooling, he would join his uncle, Thomas Rawdon, in his business in Sydney but he yearned for a more adventurous life and became an overlander on Baxter's behalf.

Baxter was a lieutenant in the 50th Regiment and arrived in Sydney in May, 1837, in charge of the guard on the convict transport, "Prince George". He was not attracted to garrison duty in N.S.W. and was granted a discharge soon after arrival. Governor Bourke offered him the dual posts of Postmaster and Clerk to the Bench in Melbourne, which he accepted.

His wife, Martha, and daughters Maria aged 4 and Barbara Gertrude, a babe in arms, had arrived one day before Baxter in the "Hope" of 377 tons after a voyage of 127 days. She, like so many other pioneer women, adjusted readily to her new life and, after proceeding to Melbourne in January, 1838, in the "James Watt", an early steam coaster, she virtually took over the Postmaster's duties. They and the Post Office were housed in a hut owned by J.P. Fawcner in a swampy section of Flinders Street. On her initiative, she despatched the first direct mail to London in the "Thomas Laurie" rather than waste time by sending it via Sydney.

Baxter soon tired of his official duties and became an early "Collins Street Farmer", dividing his time between land and building speculation in Melbourne and cattle-raising in its vicinity. His first run stretched from Emerald Hill (South Melbourne) to the Yellow Bluff at Brighton and at the same time he took out a licence for the 15,360 acre run at Carrup Carrup, South-East of Frankston. By present landmarks, it stretched from Langwarrin to the Mornington-Tyabb Road and from the Moorooduc Road for six miles to the East. Sage looked after his cattle on these properties while he looked after his town interests from the comparative comfort of the late John Batman's house on Batman's Hill. He remained in Melbourne until 1843.

During this time he was very much a man-about-town. Among other activities he drew up the original prospectus for the Melbourne Club, was a leading supporter of the embryonic theatre and was a Director of the Pastoral and Agricultural Society. He was also a first Trustee of the Savings Bank and first representative for the Bourke Ward under the Corporation Act of 1842. He bought and sold lots of land in the "city" and contracted for building cottages on his own and other people's behalf. His major land deal was the subdivision of 12½ acres in Fitzroy astride the intersection of Brunswick Street and Gertrude Street (named after his daughter).

In 1843 there was a severe depression and Baxter was one of the many who got into financial difficulties. The result was that he uprooted his family and moved permanently to Carrup Carrup, where he and most of them lived for the rest of their days. He was absent for a short period during the gold-rush when appointed Assistant Commissioner for the Mount Alexander Gold District in 1851, but Martha, although rather critical of the "bush", stayed at home minding the cattle and bringing up her family.

When Baxter moved to Carrup Carrup, Sage was able to go off for a few years gaining experience elsewhere. He set up a station at Traralgon in 1844 for T.H. Power, and another for the Chirnsides in South Australia in 1847. He also managed stations for Hugh Glass, one of the largest landholders of the day. The date of his return is not certain, but he was back in January, 1850, when he was cited by Baxter as a witness in a boundary dispute with James Davey of Davey's Bay. Maria Baxter was then 18 and although Sage was ten years older, a romance developed which led to their marriage in 1853. In the meantime, however, Sage could not resist the lure of gold, so that Martha and Maria were left alone to look after the property.

Although large in area, Carrup Carrup was fairly wild country and was never heavily stocked. In 1843 there were 325 head of cattle and 6 horses; in 1845 these had dropped to 120 head of cattle and 5 horses. By 1851, 1300 sheep had been introduced in addition to 200 cattle and 14 horses. The returns would not have been great but the family was able to keep up an active social life both locally and in Melbourne, where they were frequent visitors to Government House. They entertained many visitors at the homestead where kangaroo hunting was a favourite pastime. Both the Baxters and the Sages were keen racegoers: Martha could recall the first race meeting ever held in Melbourne and, in later days, a course was laid out at Baxter's Flat and the family names appeared frequently in the programmes. Baxter was also active in local Council affairs - he was President of the Shire of Mornington in 1874 and was a J.P. - his son Benjamin was President in 1876 and 1878.

A depasturing licence legalised the occupancy of lands but conferred no protective rights on the licensee; consequently Baxter applied for a lease for Carrup Carrup in 1848. Proceedings were held up by the boundary dispute with James Davey and, as closer settlement was taking place on the Peninsula, he decided to exercise his Pre-emptive Right to purchase his homestead block from the Crown in 1853. He was only granted 320 acres compared with the normal 640 because part of the land was in the "settled" district. However, the family did not lose much, as John Sage in 1856 was granted an adjoining block of 324 acres at 23/- an acre compared with a P.R. at 20/-. His wife Martha, his son Benjamin and his other son-in-law, Robert Hoddle, also acquired adjoining blocks. The Crown sold off the rest of the station to various buyers over a period of years. There is now only a small outbuilding left of the old homestead which was built of slabs sawn on the property.

Baxter died in 1892 but Martha lived on there till 1906 with two unmarried daughters who were left the house and part of the farm. On their death it was sold and subsequently cut up into small lots.

Sage had been able to add a small section of 68 acres to his original block and so built his farm, which he called "Eurutta", up to 393 acres. It became smaller as the years went by but remained in the family until 1976 when the Victoria Conservation Trust bought it for preservation as an example of early settlement history. The homestead, now known as "Sage's Cottage", is of traditional slab and shingle construction. The slabs would have been sawn in one of the sawpits shown on an early plan of Carrup Carrup, a little to the West of where Somerville now stands. The slabs are clearly visible in parts of the cottage. The shingles were probably replaced with a later type many years ago; the replacements are still there but have been covered with galvanised iron. The building was originally located near the Southern boundary of the main block close to the Baxter homestead. Mother and daughter would thus have been comfortably close neighbours in what were rather wild surroundings.

The cottage is remarkable for the long lives of the Sages who lived there. John and Maria occupied it after their wedding in 1853, John died at 86 having lived there 55 years, Maria died at 95 after being there 74 years, their youngest son, Thomas Holden Sage, was born and died there aged 89, and three daughters, Fanny Martha, Annie Augusta and Ellen Amynta were born and died there aged 79, 86 and 91.

Thomas inherited Eurutta on his mother's death in 1927 and kept it intact until 1944 when half the main block was sold. The other half of the main block was sold after his death in 1960. He made a gift of the remaining block to his Annie Moriah Sage, a year before his death. She was Matron of the Australian Military Forces in the Second World War. She died in 1969 and left the old homestead and its 35 acres of land to a nephew and two nieces, the descendants of John and Maria's eldest son.

The cottage and outbuildings are of considerable importance to the Historic Buildings Preservation Council and it is intended to restore them as soon and as closely as possible to their original condition. The farm property will also be restored in relation to its Eurutta and Carrup Carrup pioneering backgrounds.