



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

NEWSLETTER
No. 111 NOVEMBER 1996

NEXT MEETING

8.00 PM WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER 1996

ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZENS' CENTRE

**MAIN ROAD ELTHAM
(ENTER FROM OLD SHIRE OFFICE DRIVEWAY)**

GUEST SPEAKER - ROBERT WUCHATSCH

"WESTGARTHTOWN"

CHRISTMAS FUNCTION

6.30 PM WEDNESDAY 11TH DECEMBER 1996
ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZENS' CENTRE
BUFFET DINNER AND MYSTERY EVENING



Spring Excursion Group, Kangaroo Ground

Photo Bruce Nixon

NOVEMBER MEETING

Westgarthtown is a small settlement established in the 1850's by German emigrants. Today it comprises scattered houses and a Lutheran Church of that era, surrounded by the suburban subdivisions of Thomastown.

Robert Wuchatsch's great grandfather was one of the original settlers and the Wuchatschs are the only family to have lived continuously in the area since its beginnings. Robert, a former President of Whittlesea Historical Society, has written books on Westgarthtown and the history of the City of Whittlesea. At this meeting Robert will tell us the interesting story of his family and their settlement which is now considered to be of national heritage significance.

CHRISTMAS FUNCTION

As in recent years this will take the form of a buffet dinner and social evening. However, unlike previous functions which have had an advertised theme, the entertainment for this meeting remains a mystery. President Harry has promised to provide a suitable activity in which we can all participate or spectate. He has been known to organize trivia evenings, controversial pass the parcel games and the like but who knows what he has in store for us for this occasion.

For those who are interested Russell Yeoman will have his albums of photos from his recent overseas trip and is happy to let people browse through them or to explain them to small groups.

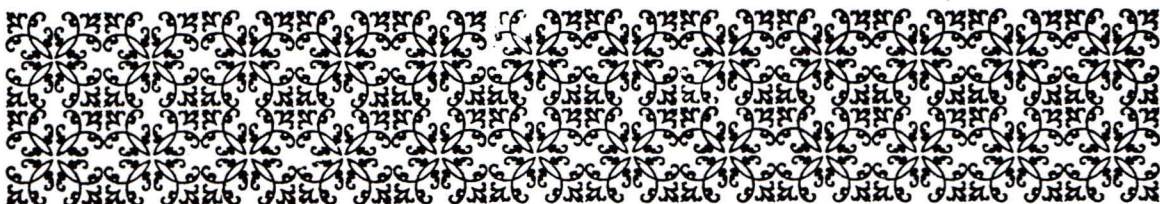
The dinner will be organized by Committee members and the cost will be \$10 per person payable on the night. Wines and other drinks will, as usual, be provided by Harry. They will include his own fruit wines with such distinctive names as "Letterbox Plum" etc.

For catering purposes we need to know how many are coming. Tell Gwen at the November meeting or ring her on 9439 8642 to confirm your attendance.

SOCIETY HEADQUARTERS

Over the past year or so we have had various discussions and correspondence with Nillumbik Council regarding a "home" for the Society. The Government owned and Council managed building at 728 Main Road Eltham was initially favoured but it seemed later that it was not available. This building, originally the police quarters and most recently the Council's environment office, now appears to be a strong possibility. We have had an on site meeting with two of the Commissioners and have now put a written proposal to them.

In anticipation of us having our own office in the near future we applied to the Council under the Community Development Grants program for funds to purchase office furniture. We have received a grant of \$500 for which we are grateful to the Council.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

In February last I had the tome size cash book of the 'League of Soldiers' Friends' passed onto our Society by newcomers in a house in John Street Eltham who had found the volume in 'the bottom of the wardrobe'./

I displayed it at our May meeting then showed it at a Heidelberg Historical Society meeting and sought information about its background.

There were two features in the handwritten entries. One being a cash column headed Cathedral Institute, the other, showing the dispersal of monies from 1918 to 1928, indicated assistance to Chaplains at Military Hospitals in Victoria and the 'provision of scholarships for the children of fallen or incapacitated sailors and soldiers'.

Gwen Orford was aware that the League had been a subject in a magazine type article in recent years.

This eventually led to the Ivanhoe Library in September where amongst their magazine section was the Victorian Historical Journal Vol. 65 No. 2 October 1994. The article on page 169 headed :

"Saving the Returned Men The Soldiers' Lounge St Paul's Cathedral"

had been written by Terry King.

Back at John Street I sought the previous owner's address. He had purchased it at Tolleys Treasure House at Mernda around 1988 as an 'interesting volume'. He is pleased to have it passed on to the Royal Historical Society of Victoria for safe keeping.

On October 10th I passed it over to Kevin Gates the Director of the RHSV for further investigation along with my research notes.

On October 22nd my mail included a thank you note and the possibility of the tome being placed with the Mollison Library at Trinity College as this is the Anglican Church Library.

Should the Mollison Library be unable to use the tome it will remain at the RHSV library for public use.

There remains the mystery of where the tome was housed between 1928 with the final cash balance and the 1988 purchase from the Mernda building that had housed a garage and metal fabrication workshop for many years.

Harry Gilham

SPRING EXCURSION

About 30 members and friends enjoyed this local tour of Kangaroo Ground, Christmas Hills and Yarra Glen. Mick Woiwod provided excellent commentary starting as we climbed Bell's Hill to Kangaroo Ground and continuing for most of the rest of the trip. At the Kangaroo Ground Cemetery Mick selected a number of graves of interesting local identities and gave a short talk on each. These included Judith Furphy, the child who was the first person known to be buried on this site.

At the Andrew Ross Museum Denise Denyer and Bruce Nixon were our hosts and we had an excellent opportunity for a good look at the displays. The coach was very large and could not drive up to the Memorial Tower so we walked up to listen to a little talk by Mick and Russell.

After a leisurely lunch at Sugarloaf Reservoir we visited the site of David Christmas's grave on the way to Yarra Glen. This required some skilful reversing by our driver. Most of the afternoon was spent wandering around Gulf Station and enjoying their lovely afternoon tea. The return trip was by way of Skyline Road and the Bend of Islands area.

We are very grateful to Bruce Nixon and Cobb and Co Coaches for their generous provision of our transport for this trip. Thanks are also due to Mick and Denise for helping to make it a very enjoyable day.

ELTHAM HERITAGE TRAIL

A team of fourteen young people calling themselves the Past to Present Trailblazers have established the Eltham Heritage Trail as a LEAP (Landcare and Environment Action Program) initiative. They have produced a trail brochure detailing the 4.8 kilometre loop walk from the Eltham Library to Montsalvat and return. Despite a few errors this is an excellent document with maps, illustrations and well written comment about each place of interest along the way. Copies are available from the Eltham Library or at the Nillumbik Festival.

NILLUMBIK HERITAGE STUDY

Stage 1 of this study has now been completed by the consultant Graeme Butler and his team. The report comprises two parts:-

- Vol 1. Review and Heritage Survey
- Vol 2. Environmental History

The project involved a review of the Shire of Eltham Heritage Study carried out by David Bick, listing of additional places within that area particularly in North Warrandyte, listing of places of significance within the relevant parts of the former Diamond Valley and Healesville Shires. The review raises a number of queries regarding a large number of the places listed in the Eltham study. These queries have not been fully pursued in this stage, nor have the additional places been fully assessed. That remains to be done when funding is provided for Stage 2 by the Council.

Volume 2 is an excellent history of the area now covered by the Shire of Nillumbik written by historian Jill Barnard.

The Society has a copy of the report. Contact Russell Yeoman if you are interested in reading it.

MORE NEWS

As part of the Nillumbik Festival (formerly the Eltham Festival) there are several "heritage" type events. On Saturday November 9th Nillumbik Historical Society has a tour of three historic sites at Diamond Creek (phone 9438 3439) and Warrandyte Historical Society has a gold mine tour (phone 9844 3662). The Andrew Ross Museum will be open on 9th and 10th November. We are organizing a display as part of the Edendale Farm 100th Anniversary celebration on 24th November.

Our President has accepted an invitation from the R.S.L. to speak at the Remembrance Day service on November 11th at the War Memorial Tower at Kangaroo Ground.

Our display cabinet in the Eltham Library currently contains a display of memorabilia from the Eltham Rural Group. It is proposed to replace it in December with "the bucket memorabilia of 1971", discovered during demolition of Eltham Shire Office.

Nillumbik Council was investigating a proposal for a roundabout at the corner of Main Road and Dudley Street, Eltham. They consulted the Society and the R.S.L. on the effect on the adjacent Eltham War Memorial site. We wrote to the Council setting out a number of difficulties which we could see with the proposal. We have now received advice that the roundabout proposal has been abandoned in favour of traffic signals.

Harry Gilham
President
Phone 9439 1175

Russell Yeoman
Secretary
9439 9717

Gwen Orford
Treasurer/Membership Secretary
9439 8642



OLD POLICE STATION
ELTHAM .

Peter Glass 1963

A PUNT ACROSS THE YARRA AT ELTHAM?

While researching something quite different Mick Woiwod came across the following article in the Argus of 19th June 1860:

At the conclusion of the Court of Petty Sessions held at Eltham on the 14th inst., before C. W. Carr, Esq., P.M., a deputation, consisting of Messrs. Armstrong, Page, Hunniford, and Pearson, waited on that gentleman, with a view of securing his support in inducing the Government to hand over to them the punt, and its appurtenances, originally established at Anderson's Creek, but which had during the late floods been carried away, and, after floating down the tortuous bends of the Yarra Yarra for a distance of 30 miles, stranded on the banks of Major Newman's property, where it now lies. The punt in question was placed in its original position by the Government several years ago, with the object of connecting the Anderson's Creek and Caledonia Gold-fields; but, it being considered impossible to replace it, the deputation propose shifting it from its present position to some suitable spot lower down the river, near the junction of the Diamond Creek with the Yarra, in order to connect Eltham, Anderson's Creek, and Templestowe, the want of such a communication having been felt by the inhabitants of those places for a long time past. The police-magistrate concurred with the object of the deputation, and promised his assistance in bringing the matter under the consideration of the proper authorities with as little delay as possible; and he also stated to the deputation that he had received official information that it was not intended to restore the punt to its original site, and that, in his opinion, the public service would be benefited by connecting the three townships of Templestowe, Eltham, and Anderson's Creek.

Mick has not followed it up but wonders if anyone has any more information, particularly whether the punt was actually established in the new location.

It is noted that the article says the punt floated downstream about 30 miles. The distance along the river from Anderson's Creek (Warrandyte) to Major Newman's (near the junction Mullum Mullum Creek in Templestowe) is in fact less than 5 miles.

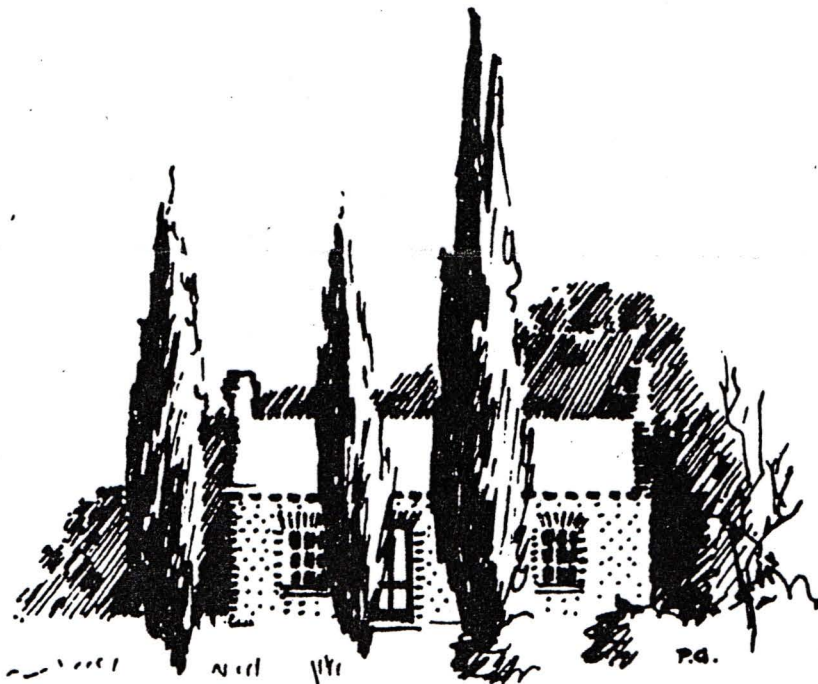
FORMER ELTHAM SHIRE OFFICE SITE

Nillumbik Shire Council has decided to grant a permit to developer Dallas Price Homes for a commercial complex on this site including a Shell petrol station, Hungry Jack's restaurant, convenience shop and other uses. The Society objected to the application on the basis that it would require the removal of three cypress trees near the front of the site which are the only remains of the original Shillinglaw Cottage garden. These trees are identified in the Eltham Heritage Study as having local heritage significance and are considered worthy of planning scheme protection. The study has not been adopted by the Council.

Plans of the development have a notation saying that the trees are to be relocated to Council's satisfaction. It is considered that the trees have received inadequate attention in terms of the design, Council officer's report and the decision of the Council. We have received advice from arborist Nick Archer that the trees will require twelve months preparation to enable them to be relocated with any significant chance of success. We agree with other advice we have received that the trees will lose most of their significance if relocated. Margaret Ball on behalf of the descendants of the Shillinglaw family has requested that the trees remain on the site but as a last resort says that they should be relocated to near the present site of Shillinglaw Cottage.

The Eltham Gateway Action Group is an incorporated association of local residents set up to preserve the character of Eltham's "Gateway". It has lodged an appeal against the Council's decision with the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. The appeal covers our interest in the trees but includes far wider issues as well. We do not intend to lodge an appeal in our own right. Rather we will make a donation to the E.G.A.G. and assist them with the tree aspect of the appeal.

Conduct of this appeal will be expensive and donations are being sought by E.G.A.G. Any member willing to assist should contact the Secretary Margaret Jennings on 9439 2436.



The Shillinglaw Trees, and the Cottage

Peter Glass 1963