

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

NEWSLETTER  
No. 112 JANUARY 1997

**NEXT MEETING**

**8.00 PM WEDNESDAY, 12 FEBRUARY 1997**

**ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZEN'S CENTRE**

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

**TOPIC "ELTHAM ON VIDEO"**

**ELTHAM ON VIDEO**

At our February meeting we plan to show an assorted collection of videos, mainly of local interest.

These will include:

Three short videos produced by the Shire of Eltham in the 1980's and 90's, the final one being during the lead-up to Council restructuring.

Documentary on Pecks Dam, Montmorency by Peter Dodds.

Excerpts of 'home video' of demolition of Eltham Shire Offices by Jenni Mitchell and Mervyn Hannan.

Russell and Marion Yeoman meeting with committee of the Eltham Society in England.

## 1997 PROGRAMME

Once again the new year has arrived and we have an almost blank schedule of meetings and other activities to be filled out. Details of the February meeting are finalized. In March we have the Annual General Meeting. In a variation of the "My Eltham" theme of the past few years, Russell Yeoman will talk on "Their Eltham". This will be based largely on a trip to Eltham, England but the other Elthams of the world will also be mentioned.

We hope to have an excursion to Doncaster and Templestowe in the Autumn. The Committee is currently considering other activities for the year. Please talk to a Committee member if you have any ideas.

## FORMER ELTHAM SHIRE OFFICE SITE - PLANNING APPEAL

Our last Newsletter contained an item on the proposal to redevelop the old shire office site for a Shell petrol station, Hungry Jack's restaurant and other uses. The Eltham Gateway Action Group and several individuals have lodged appeals against Nillumbik Council's decision to grant a permit.

The Minister of Planning and Local Government has "called in" the appeal. That means that a decision will be made by the Governor-in-Council on the recommendation of the Minister rather than by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. The Minister has invited written submissions on the matter from all of the parties.

As a society our interest in the matter is confined to the "Shillinglaw Trees" which stand on the site. On behalf of the Society, Russell Yeoman prepared a report on these trees to accompany EGAG's submission. The report is repeated here for the interest of members.



Shillinglaw Cottage and the trees prior to 1906. The people are Phillip Shillinglaw, his mother, Jean (nee Blemmer, died 1906) and daughters Mary and Lizzie. Another photo of similar age more clearly shows that there were only two trees at the time.

Margaret Ball - Shillinglaw Family Collection

# THE "SHILLINGLAW TREES"

## Introduction

The report concerns three Italian cypress trees (*Cupressus Sempervirens*) located on the site of the former Eltham Shire Office, 895 Main Road Eltham.

Nillumbik Shire Council has decided to grant a permit for redevelopment of this site as a convenience centre including a petrol station, fast food cafe/take-away and other uses. The development plans show that these trees are to be removed.

This Society objected to the grant of a permit on the basis that the trees have local heritage significance and should be retained on the site. On this basis we support the appeal by the Eltham Gateway Action Group against the Council's decision. This report sets out the reasons for the Society's position in this matter. It has been prepared mainly from Society records, the writer's personal knowledge and research and discussions with Shillinglaw family representatives and others with a knowledge of the relevant history.

## History

The three cypress trees originally were part of the garden of Shillinglaw Cottage which occupied the site prior to erection of the Eltham Shire Offices. The cottage was relocated about 200 metres to the south where it is now used as a restaurant.

Research at the time of construction of the Shire Offices (1963/4) suggested that the cottage was built in the late 1850's. More recent research (carried out by Carlotta Kellaway for the Eltham Heritage Study) indicates that it was built in 1878 by prominent local builder George Stebbing. Soon after it was purchased by Phillip Shillinglaw and was occupied by his family until it was purchased by the Shire. At the time of purchase the cottage was home to two Misses Shillinglaw, daughters of Phillip.

Shillinglaw Cottage is classified by the National Trust and listed on the Register of the National Estate.

The age of the trees is unknown. The Eltham Heritage Study estimates that they were planted c.1920. However, photos known to be taken prior to 1906 show two of the trees as being more than twice as high as the cottage. They were substantial trees then and we estimate their age to be c.100 years. The third tree must have been planted later but is still of great age.

The trees stood in a rather overgrown garden at the front of the cottage and early views along Main Road show them as a distinctive landmark.

In 1963/4 the Eltham Shire Council was proceeding with its proposals to construct new shire offices on the site. There was local concern as to the fate of the cottage. The Shillinglaw Cottage Preservation Committee was formed by local residents with the objective of relocating the cottage on nearby Council land. Funds were raised and the cottage was dismantled, then rebuilt and restored over several years being completed about 1971. The original proposal for its use as a museum has not eventuated and it is used as a restaurant.

The trees were retained on their original site. They were in an awkward position close to the front of the Shire Office building and a conscious decision must have been made to retain them, indicating that they were considered at the time to be of some importance. It would have been quite easy at the time of construction to have removed the trees but it is significant that they were retained.

From time to time since 1965 the question of removal has been raised in the context of office security and it was even said that they detracted from the appearance of the office. Again it is significant that the trees have been retained over this period because of their heritage value.

The Eltham Shire office building was demolished in August 1996. There appears to have been no specific intention by the Council or the contractor to either remove or retain the Shillinglaw trees. However, because of their proximity to the building they were in significant danger of damage. Due to the action of Harry Gilham, President of this Society, agreement was reached with the contractor for protection of the trees so that their future remained to be assessed.

Shillinglaw Cottage once stood on lot 90 of Holloway's 1851 "Little Eltham" subdivision which had an area of 12 hectares (30 acres). Over the years large parts were acquired by the Council for parks and road and by the government for the railway. Part was purchased by the Eltham War Memorial Trust and other smaller parts were sold privately. At the time of acquisition by Council of the cottage, its land was only 0.8 hectares (2 acres) in area. The only evidence remaining on the cottage site or, in fact, any of lot 90 of the Shillinglaw's long occupation is the three cypress trees.

#### Effect of the Development Proposal

The plan of the development shows that two of the trees are to be located within a landscaped area close to the front of the building. The third occupies a parking space. The plan shows that the trees are to be "relocated to Council's satisfaction". It would be a relatively simple job to redesign the plan to leave the trees in place.

However, a further difficulty arises in that the ground level in the vicinity is proposed to be raised about one metre. The applicant has not indicated any willingness to redesign the development to save the trees.

#### Heritage Study and Other Reports

The trees are listed in the Shire of Eltham Heritage Study by David Bick (1996). They are classified as being of local significance warranting local planning protection.

The Nillumbik Shire Heritage Study by Graeme Butler and Associates (1996) provides a review of Bick's work. In respect of the trees queries are raised on the history and sources of information. However, a separate report by Graeme Butler and Associates commissioned by the Council deals particularly with the trees and the effect of the proposed development. This report strongly recommends that the three cypress trees be retained in their original location. It goes on to say that any proposed relocation would result in the loss of cultural significance and would severely threaten the future health of the trees.

A separate arboricultural report was commissioned by the Council and was carried out by Glenn Waters of Arborco Pty Ltd. The conclusion of this report is that the best option for the future management of these trees is for their retention in their current location. Guidelines for care of the trees is included.

The officer's report to the Council's Planning Committee refers to the Bick study but significantly none of the other reports is mentioned.

Separate arboricultural and heritage reports commissioned by the Eltham Gateway Action Group confirm the conclusions of the studies done for the Council.

#### The Shillinglaw Family

Discussions have been held with descendants of the Shillinglaw Family and, in particular, Margaret Ball on their views on this matter. They say that the family was unhappy with the acquisition of the cottage site by the Council and is even more unhappy now that the land is to be sold by the Council. They believe that the trees should be retained on the site to mark the former location of the family home.

#### Conclusion

This Society agrees with the reports which classify these trees as being of local heritage significance.

We believe they should be retained on the site. We consider that they have been particularly poorly treated in terms of the design of the development and the Council's consideration of the application. There is overwhelming advice that the trees should remain because their cultural importance and their chances of survival would be seriously threatened by relocation.

We think that the trees should be retained for their landmark and streetscape qualities and because they are the only remaining evidence of the location of the important Shillinglaw Cottage and the occupation of lot 90 by the Shillinglaw Family. It follows that we recommend that development as proposed in the application should not be approved.

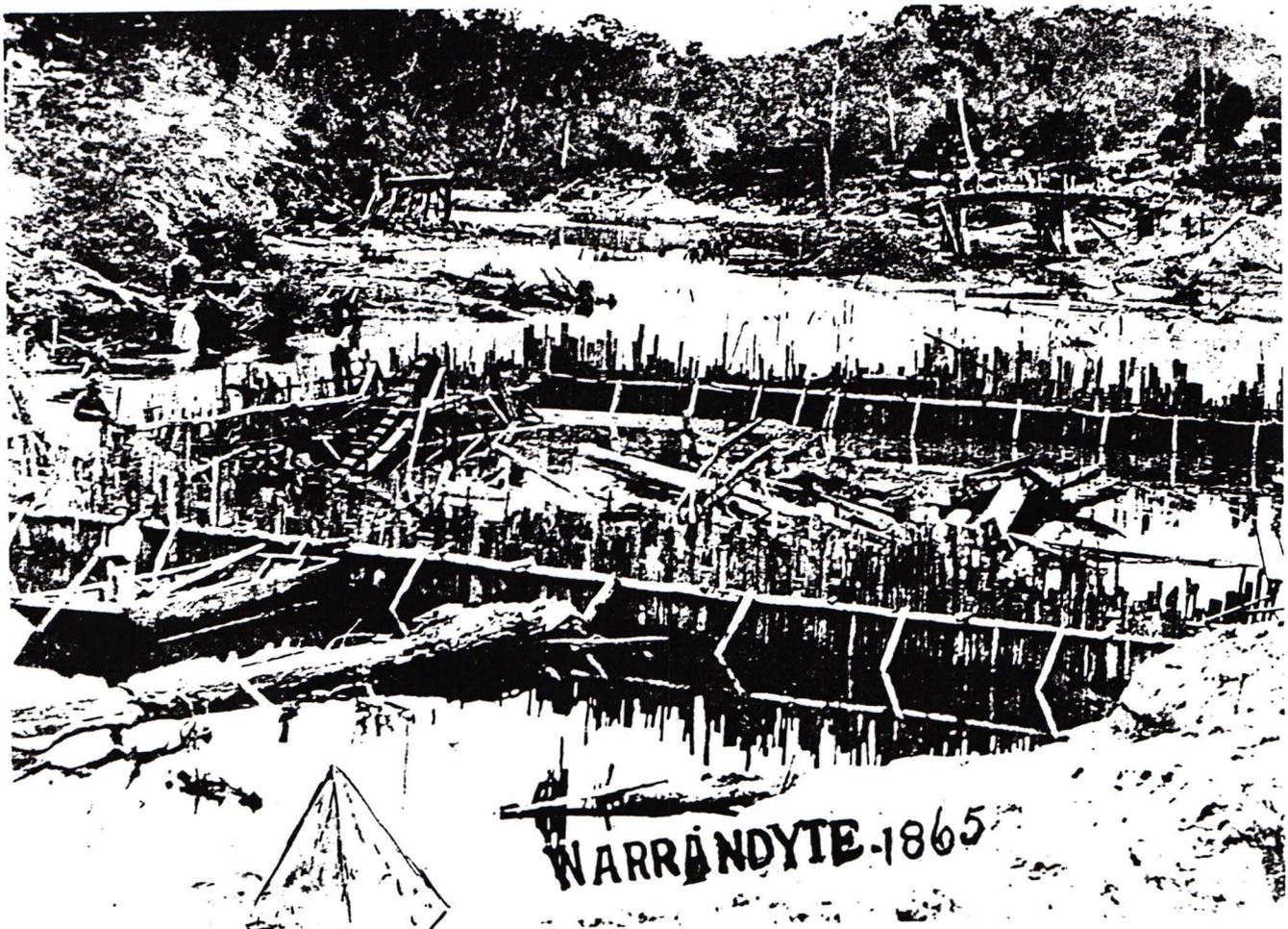
## YARRA RIVER PUNT. WARRANDYTE

In response to an item in the last Newsletter, Irvine Green has provided the following information and photograph.

The punt that connected Eltham with Warrandyte and was washed away during the flood in 1860, was not replaced because a new bridge was built at Warrandyte, this opened in 1861. It was short lived, for in the large flood of November 1863 it too was washed away.

In the photograph of the river at Warrandyte the wreckage of the bridge can be seen in a coffer dam. The approaches to the bridge still remain leading to an open space over the water. This coffer dam was constructed to drain the bed of the Yarra so that gold could be scraped from between the rocks. The coffer dam was drained by an endless belt of buckets. In the foreground is the pyramid-shaped darkroom tent of the photographer who took the photograph.

The punt had been installed in 1856 in a position near the site of the old Warrandyte Post Office. It was not until 1875 that another bridge was built, it lasted until 1955 when the present bridge was built.



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

To satisfy the requirements of the Society's rules, notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Eltham District Historical Society Incorporated will be held at 8.00 pm on Wednesday 12th March 1997.

The Agenda of the Annual General Meeting is set out below in accordance with the rules. Further detail will be given in the March Newsletter.

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of 1996 Annual General Meeting
3. Reports:
  - a. President's Report
  - b. Treasurer's Report
  - c. Any other Reports
4. Statement by the Society in accordance with Section 30(3) of the Associations Incorporation Act 1981
5. Election of office bearers and ordinary members of committee  
Positions to be filled are as follows:  
President  
Senior Vice President  
Junior Vice President  
Treasurer/Membership Secretary  
Secretary  
Ordinary Committee Members  
(not less than three and not more than six)
6. Fixing of entrance fee (if any) and annual subscription
7. Any other business of which at least two weeks notice have been given to members

It should be noted that under the Society's rules nominations of office bearers should be made in writing to the Secretary not less than seven days before the meeting.

Nominations should be signed by two members of the Society and accompanied by the written consent of the candidate. If insufficient nominations are received further nominations shall be received at the meeting. However, it should be noted that where a valid prior nomination is received it will have priority and no nomination for that position can be accepted at the meeting.

Harry Gilham  
President  
Phone - 9439-1175

Russell Yeoman  
Secretary  
Phone - 9439 9717

Gwen Orford  
Treasurer/Membership Secretary  
Phone - 9439 8642

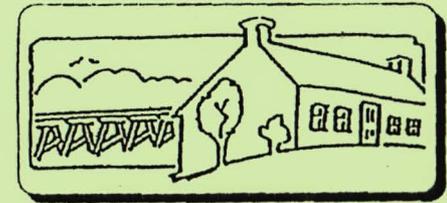
Visitors are most welcome at  
General Meetings

Unless otherwise advised,  
General Meetings are held at  
the Senior Citizens'  
Clubrooms.

Any additions or alterations to this  
programme will be advised in the  
Newsletter.

General            Russell Yeoman  
enquires:        Phone- 9439 9717

Harry Gilham  
Phone - 9439 1175



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P OBox 137 Eltham, Victoria 3095**



OLD POLICE STATION  
ELTHAM . Peter Glass 1963

**Programme**

**1997**

**30TH ANNIVERSARY  
1967 - 1997**

## 1997

### FEBRUARY

Wednesday 12th  
8:00 pm      General Meeting  
                  Eltham on Video

### MARCH

Wednesday 12th  
8:00 pm      Annual General Meeting  
                  Election of Office Bearers

Speaker : Russell Yeoman  
                  "Their Eltham"

### APRIL

Sunday 6th  
1:30 pm      Autumn Excursion  
                  Doncaster Templestowe

Wednesday 9th  
8:00 pm      Committee Meeting

Monday 14th to      Victorian  
Monday 28th      Heritage Festival

### MAY

Wednesday 14th  
8:00 pm      General Meeting

Speaker - Jill Barnard  
"Nillumbik Heritage Study"

### JUNE

Wednesday 11th  
8:00 pm      Committee Meeting

### JULY

Wednesday 9th

Society 30th Anniversary  
6:30 pm      Buffet Dinner  
8:00 pm      Discussion Panel  
                  "The Society's First 30 Years"

### AUGUST

Wednesday 13th  
8:00 pm      Committee Meeting

### SEPTEMBER

Wednesday 10th  
8:00 pm      General Meeting

Speaker - Jock Ryan  
"Gold in the Valley"

### OCTOBER

Wednesday 8th  
8:00 pm      Committee Meeting

Sunday 26th  
                  Spring Excursion  
                  Seymour/Hume & Hovell - Stage 2  
                  (To be confirmed)

### NOVEMBER

Wednesday 12th  
8:00 pm      General Meeting  
                  Topic to be advised

### DECEMBER

Wednesday 10th  
6:30 pm      Christmas Dinner  
                  Local Knowledge and  
                  Historical Trivia Quiz