



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

NEWSLETTER

No. 119 MARCH 1998

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

8.00 PM WEDNESDAY 11TH MARCH 1998

ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZENS' CENTRE

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

GUEST SPEAKER - WENDY BAKER

"FINDING PEOPLE - DEAD OR ALIVE"

AUTUMN EXCURSION

2 PM SATURDAY 18TH APRIL

ELTHAM HERITAGE STUDY TOUR

STARTS AT 728 MAIN ROAD ELTHAM

FINDING PEOPLE - DEAD OR ALIVE"

In our programme we listed Wendy Baker's talk as "An Historian from Montmorency". Well Wendy is certainly a resident of Montmorency and she is Secretary of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. But Wendy tells us that her training is as a genealogist rather than an historian so she has selected a more appropriate title for her talk. The title is self-explanatory and Wendy says she has structured the talk to be of interest to those interested in local history or genealogy or perhaps you are interested in both.

If you are an occasional or even new attender of our meetings, don't let the annual meeting aspect put you off. The formal part will be brief and it is well worth coming for Wendy's talk on a very popular subject.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Despite the fact that we have arranged an interesting and informative speaker and we plan to keep the formal AGM as brief as possible, this does not detract from the importance of the AGM to our members. At this meeting we will review our activities of the past year and elect our office bearers and committee members to guide us through the year ahead. We urge members to consider their contribution to the Society and if you feel that you have something to offer then we would be happy to see you nominate for the Committee. We have been served well by the present Committee but these members do not have a monopoly on running the Society. Competition and new blood would be most welcome and to the great benefit of our Society.

Please give this matter your careful thought.

The agenda for the meeting was published in the January Newsletter, including a list of the positions to be filled. All positions become vacant and retiring members are eligible to re-nominate. Please note that in accordance with the Society's rules if a written nomination is received prior to the meeting then that takes precedence over any nomination made at the AGM.

AUTUMN EXCURSION

At the February meeting Russell Yeoman provided an overview of the Shire of Eltham Heritage Study and read some extracts from the study, mainly relating to the general recommendations and the proposed heritage conservation areas. There was not time at that meeting to deal with any of the individually recommended places. We have discussed some of these at various times in the past and have also visited a few of them. We plan to cover some more of these individual places by excursions and a further meeting later in the year.

The first of the excursions will be on Saturday 18th April. It will be a drive yourself excursion but transport can be arranged for those not wishing to drive. Advise Russell Yeoman if you require transport. We plan to start at 2pm from 728 Main Road Eltham and go till about 5pm. Bring something for afternoon tea if you wish. For those who have not seen our new premises (in its as yet partly furnished and partly stocked state) there will be an inspection at about 1.30pm.

The plan for the tour is to cover the Lower Plenty area where there are nine sites recommended for local planning protection. The itinerary is somewhat flexible and depends on whether we can obtain access to some of the properties or merely view them from the street.

The study makes only one recommendation in the Lower Plenty area for inclusion in Victorian Heritage Register (formerly Historic Buildings Register) and the Register of the National Estate. This relates to the suspension footbridge across the Yarra River (c.1953) at Odyssey House, Bonds Road. (The later Nillumbik Heritage Study queries the heritage value of this bridge). We propose to visit this bridge first and then take in as many others of the listed sites as we can in the time. Odyssey House itself is recommended for local planning protection as is the nearby Christian Brothers Centre, "Amberley". We will at least have an external view of these properties. Very old River Red Gums in the Bonds Road area are also listed in the study.

There is no need to book for this tour unless you require transport. Just come on the day but remember that it is some time off and there will be no further Newsletter to remind you. Note the date and time now.

SOCIETY PROGRAMME

There are already some changes to the 1998 programme sent out with the January Newsletter.

The date of the Nillumbik Shire reconciliation event being run jointly by Nillumbik Council and the Wurundjeri Council has been changed to Saturday 9th May. This unfortunately coincides with the Living and Learning Centre "Eltham Muddie Walk" being organized by Russell Yeoman.

The reconciliation event is to commence at 12 noon with a "Walking Together". This is a symbolic walk from Alistair Knox Park to Wingrove Park, to be followed by a "Welcome to Country" and a civic welcome. A presentation of the Nillumbik Statement of Reconciliation and Apology will be made to the representatives of the Wurundjeri people. The public is invited to the walk and later ceremonies which will conclude about 6.30pm.

We have been invited to participate in some way such as by arranging a display. No decision has yet been made on our involvement and further information will be included in the May Newsletter which should be distributed just before the event.

Harry Gilham is planning an overseas trip which will affect some activities he is to be involved in. The chronology project was scheduled for our May meeting and now will be later in the year. We will bring forward one of the later items to replace it. The official opening of 728 Main Road, previously scheduled for 17th May will be put back probably to a date in July.

The Victorian Heritage Festival commences on 26th March somewhat earlier than in previous years. The theme this year is "Our Community Heritage". We do not have a formal involvement but there will be a new display in our library display cabinet to mark the occasion.

OTHER NEWS

In our Newsletter No. 116 it was reported that the former shop on the corner of Main Road and York Street, Eltham was to be demolished as part of a funeral parlour development. If you have passed the site recently you will have noticed that it has now been demolished - another part of the old Eltham township has disappeared. On a brighter note there are a few newer buildings which are adding to the character of the area (rather than submerging it as most modern housing does). On a prominent hilltop in Eltham North Hamish Knox is building a group of interesting mud brick houses on the late Jim Murray's land. Down to Earth Builders are constructing an interesting muddie at Kangaroo Ground just past Eltham College and in Silver Street there is an unusual garage and studio being built adjacent to the railway.

Nillumbik Council has decided that we are to be charged \$100 per year rental for 728 Main Road. This is far from being a commercial rate but it is a significant amount for our small budget particularly when combined with water and electricity costs. The Committee is to recommend that our subscriptions for 1998/9 be increased to \$12.50 adults and \$17.50 for a family. This small increase will not cover our increased costs without a significant increase in members. The Committee needs to carefully consider our future financial position to ensure that we remain on a sound footing.

Banyule Council is undertaking a major study of Aboriginal heritage places within that municipality. As a Society we do not have a lot of information on Aboriginal places in the Montmorency-Lower Plenty area that is not readily available from other sources. This area was covered by the Shire of Eltham Aboriginal Heritage Study. Although this study has been completed for some time, it has not been released by Nillumbik Council. It is understandable that some of the sensitive information in the study is not publicly released. However, it might be appropriate for some form of summarized report to be published.

Harry Gilham and Russell Yeoman have been working with Chris Marks of Nillumbik Council's Arts Section in collating memorabilia from the Shire of Eltham. The job is somewhat longer than first thought because various Council departments keep producing items for the collection. There is a significant collection of photos of council projects and activities during the early 1990's. Contract archivist Fraser Faithfull is providing advice on the cataloguing and storage of the material. Once the collection is in order some items may be given or loaned to the Society.

"GLEN ELLEN" circa 1920

by David Jenkin

In 1919 J. B. North, a violinist with the then Melbourne Symphonic Orchestra, and Monsieur Leon Lambert, a French architect, who later designed the Glaciarium Ice Skating Rink, purchased one of three available farms, Looker's, Wright's or Taylor's, the area being bordered by the present day Ryans Road, Karingal Drive and Sherbourne Road. The farms were used for orchards and market gardens.

Leon Lambert designed and built two homes on the farm site, one for the North family, "Tralford", and the other, "Glen Ellen", for himself and his wife.

The homes were considered as "brother and sister" and they each included in their design an identical bay window in the main living area. "Glen Ellen" originally comprised kitchen, lounge room, inglenook, dining room, bath room and sleepout. Although the home has been extended over the years, much of the original architecture has been retained including timber paneling and three fireplaces.

"Tralford" stayed in the North family for many years. Eltham Council acquired the house to create Meruka Park and the house became a refuge for homeless people. It fell into disrepair and was demolished, the council replacing the building with the Meruka Child Care Centre, designed on similar architectural lines.

"Glen Ellen" was sold to Frederick William Warne in 1926 after the death of Leon Lambert and remained in the Warne family until 1954 when the Charlestons bought the property.

The land was subdivided in approximately 1966 with "Glen Ellen" retaining approximately one-half acre of land fronting Meruka Drive. The property then passed from the Charleston family to Gerald and Margaret Sutton in 1976 and again was sold in 1980 and lastly sold again in 1994.

The current owners are seeking old photographs and/or information regarding changes to the floor plan, etc. made over the years to piece together a more extensive history of the house, and would especially like to hear from Leslie Francis and Nelma Louisa Charleston or relatives of. Please contact David or Karen BH 9431 1719 or AH 9431 2036 if you can help us.

Harry Gilham
President

Russell Yeoman
Secretary

Gwen Orford
Treasurer /
Membership Secretary
Phone 9439 8642

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Phone - 9439 9717

Another item worth reporting is that Mick Woiwod and I have been working on the Kangaroo Ground advisory committee. This committee is an advisory committee to the Council which, in time, will seek finance to upgrade the land and building of the Tower which is the Shire of Eltham's War Memorial, it is now 71 years old. (Opened 1926). For those visitors who cannot or do not wish to climb the steep stairs in the tower, we hope to convince council to add viewing platforms and seats at ground level outside the trees so the views can be enjoyed, access will be from a path from the carpark.

Let me finish this report by sharing with members the wording on the letterhead of our friends the (English) Eltham Historical Society :

*Preserving the past
Conserving the present
Protecting the future.*



Harry Gilham
President, 1993-1998

**ELTHAM AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INCORPORATED
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY 11TH MARCH 1998**

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The past year between our Annual General Meetings has had several highlights worth recording.

Our six general meeting, two of which were preceded by buffet dinners, seven committee gatherings and two excursions made for a busy year. Again their planning by Secretary Russell Yeoman, deserves the societies thank for his pivotal role in our programme.

Now that the Society has the keys to old Police House, 728 Main Road, Eltham, (corner of Brougham Street) for our historical materials storage, display and research facility, we hope to attract the public's attention. We will be able to publicise the venue when organised and display items of historical value to other like minded people. We will then be able to preserve more items, either by copying and returning or storing with the donors names, and become a true community resource.

Nillumbik Council asked the Society to take on the role of organiser/landlord with three other tenants groups who use other, lockable, parts of the site. Eltham Concert Band has its music library in the Police Office and the stables and storage sheds are being used by the Nillumbik Garden Club and the Society for Growing Australian Plants.

This mix of community groups coming and going through the site will support the security of all tenants.

With around \$1,000 from the Nillumbik Community Funds grant program we have purchased a second hand photo copier, tables, chairs, and various types of storage cabinets and shelving. We also have the ongoing service costs of electricity, water/sewerage and the \$100 yearly payment to the Shire Council to face up to each year.

Working Bees are planned and, in time, rosters will be needed for the open days of displays for schoolgroups, people and special events such as the Eltham Festival weekend.