

ELTHAM DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Incorporated

No. A0016285F

728 MAIN ROAD (PO BOX 137) ELTHAM 3095

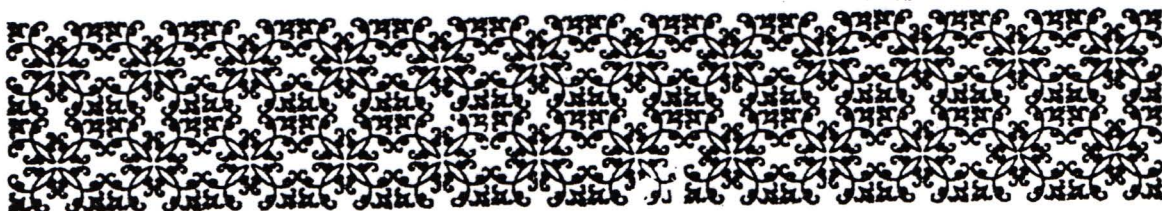
NEWSLETTER NO. 131 MARCH 2000

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
8.00 PM WEDNESDAY 8TH MARCH**

**ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZENS' CENTRE
MAIN ROAD ELTHAM
(ENTER FROM OLD SHIRE OFFICE DRIVEWAY)**

**SPEAKER: BRUCE NIXON
"CHARLES JOSEPH LA TROBE"**

**AUTUMN EXCURSION
HEIDELBERG SCHOOL ARTISTS' TRAIL
STARTS AT
ELTHAM LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE
728 MAIN ROAD ELTHAM
9.30 AM SUNDAY 16TH APRIL**



MARCH MEETING

The March meeting is the Annual General Meeting where we review the activities of the past year and set in place our 2000 Committee to take us through the year ahead. Members are encouraged to attend, not just for the excellent speaker but to take part in the important formal part of the meeting.

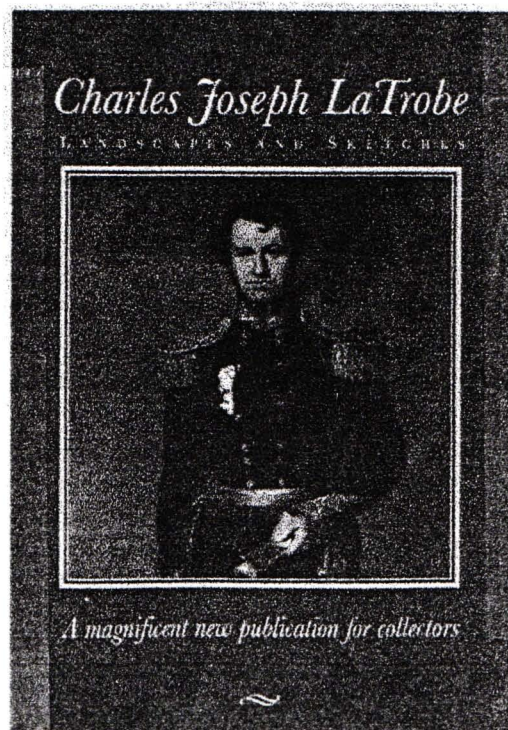
In accordance with the Society's rules the agenda of the A.G.M. was published in the January Newsletter. It included details of the office bearers and committee members to be elected. All positions become vacant and we urge members who feel that they have something to contribute to the Society to consider standing for one of the positions. Please note that, in accordance with the rules, any written nominations received prior to the meeting take precedence over nominations made at the meeting.

CHARLES JOSEPH LA TROBE

C. J. La Trobe, the first Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria, was an accomplished artist. Between 1827 and 1858 he travelled widely in Europe and North America and published four books recounting and illustrating his travel experiences. His historical role is well known but his achievements as an artist are not.

Bruce Nixon, through his company Tarcoola Press, has been responsible for the publication of a limited edition book featuring all of the known artistic works of La Trobe. It includes a new biography of La Trobe by Dianne Reilly and extended captions to more than one hundred paintings by art historian Victoria Hammond. Altogether, this is quite a magnificent volume.

In the preparation of the book Bruce has acquired a significant amount of material and knowledge of La Trobe. He is happy to share this information with us and will speak after the conclusion of the formal business of the A.G.M. Visitors are welcome and we promise to be brief with the formal part of the meeting.



AUTUMN EXCURSION

On Sunday 16 April we will continue our journey on the Heidelberg School Artists' Trail.

Last October a small group ambitiously set out to see how much of the trail could be covered in a day. The answer to this question was not much. Visits to locations in Heidelberg lasted into the early afternoon and after a late lunch most thought that was enough for the day.

That still leaves trail sites in Templestowe, Eltham, Warrandyte, Research, Diamond Creek and in the Dandenongs, that remain to be visited. Based on our previous experience this is probably enough for two excursions.

For those who didn't join the last excursion the trail consists of signs featuring works by Heidelberg School artists at or near the location at which they were painted.

The Eltham signs mainly feature works by Walter Withers. Because it extends over such a long distance the trail is based on driving rather than walking.

Most locations involve short walks. For this excursion we will concentrate on local sites at Eltham, Research and Diamond Creek and whatever others we can fit into the day. We may also take the opportunity to visit some of the works in Nillumbik Council's "Art in Public Places" series.

This is a self drive excursion but transport will be available for those who prefer not to drive. There is no charge and no need to book. Simply be at 728 Main Road at 9.30 am. Bring some lunch to eat at the Local History Centre and whatever you need to eat or drink to keep you going along the way. Members of other societies and the public generally who have access to this Newsletter are most welcome to attend. For enquiries ring Russell on 9439 9717.

SOCIETY PROGRAMME 2000

Our programme of activities for the year is included with this Newsletter. Some of the listings towards the end of the year have not been fully arranged and there may be some flexibility but we will try and keep to the advertised programme. Any changes will be notified in the Newsletter.

The programme includes a varied range of activities from high profile speakers at meetings to a number of informal do-it-yourself type events. One of these is planned to be the "Members Projects" night in November. We already have one project in mind. This is Margaret Ball's on-going task of photographing individual houses in streets in central Eltham, to be followed up by researching the history of these houses.

There are three excursions, all in the local area in accordance with our practice in the past few years.

Please consider whether you would like to contribute to the May meeting. In commemoration of the year 2000 we plan to talk about the past one hundred years, either personal reminiscences or from research. A panel of four or five people will each give a short talk appropriate to the subject.

Our workshops for organizing the Society records at our Local History Centre are continuing. Please note the dates of workshops over the next few months and come along if you can.

COLEMANS CORNER

Colemans Corner is situated at the corner of Main Road and Wattletree Road Eltham where Main Road turns to the east heading towards Research. In a small "island" surrounded by roads and the railway sit two houses, one the former Coleman home that gives the corner its name.

Last year a proposal to demolish the Coleman house and replace it with a multi-unit residential development was the subject of a planning appeal. The decision was to grant a permit for the proposal but at this stage the house remains. Local resident Dorothy Peatling and Councillor Margaret Jennings prepared an appeal submission on behalf of objectors which included a significant amount of historical information. They referred in their submission to a document that had been found in "the bucket" time capsule when the Eltham Shire Offices were demolished in 1996. The document showed a 1904 photo of the Coleman family in front of their house, a 1971 photo of the house, both being pasted on a map showing the site. The reason for inclusion of this document in the bucket is not readily apparent.

The Society now owns the bucket and its contents and a copy of the appeal submission has been given to the Society for its records. The historical information in the submission paints an interesting picture of the house and its inhabitants that is worth noting here. Because it is an appeal submission it contains information that is not relevant from an historical point of view. The information has been edited for inclusion here but it includes information based on interviews with local residents which is quoted with little change.

An important factor in the submission was that the original Coleman house (fairly new in the 1904 photograph) has been incorporated into the present house

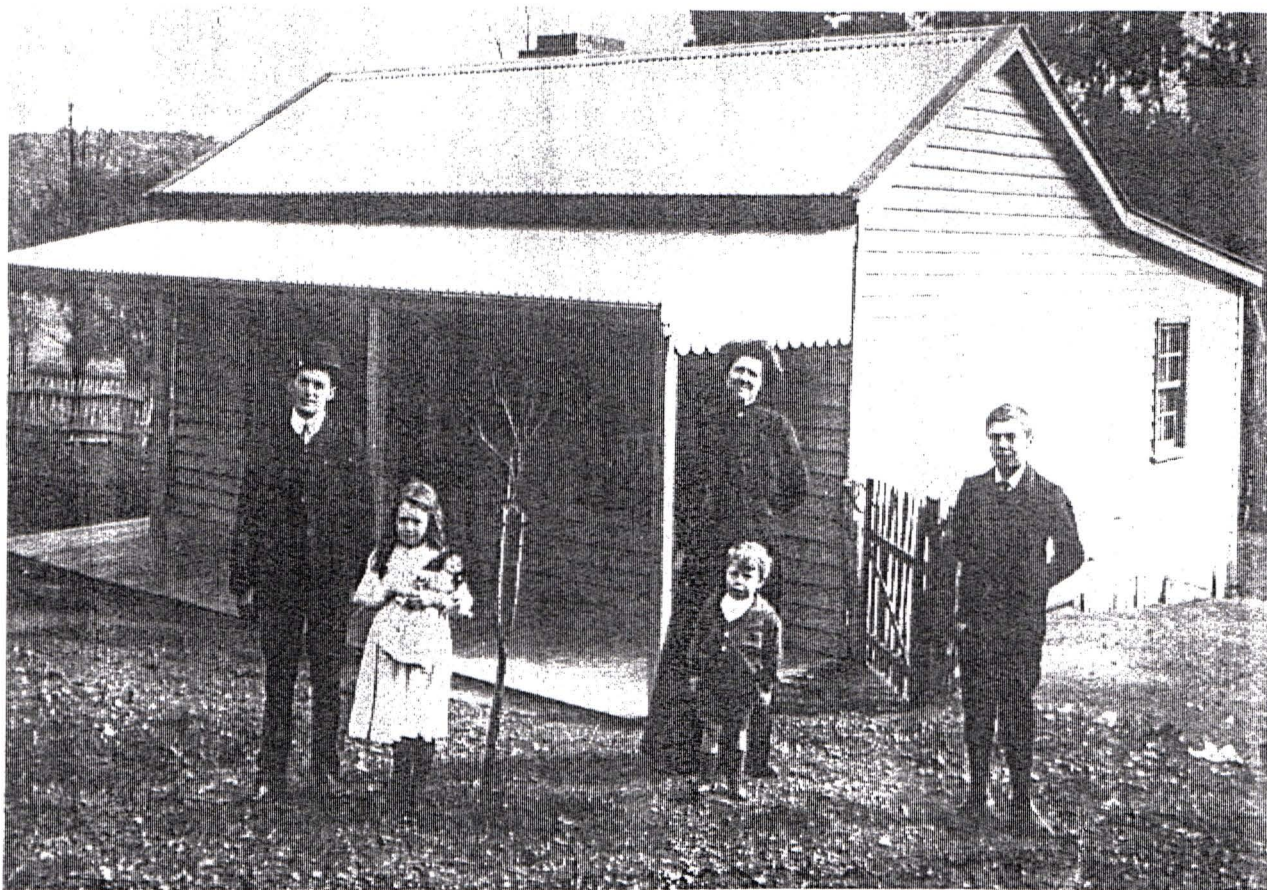
It is also noted that the original Main Road ran behind the house and along the present Coleman Crescent. The construction of the railway in 1912 interfered with that route. The Eltham North bridge was on the alignment of Coleman Crescent and following construction of the railway that was where the railway crossing was located. Main Road was realigned to its present location in front of the house and the Wattletree Road bridge and level crossing replaced the Coleman Crescent alignment.

The submission notes the strategic location of the Coleman house at the junction of two important early roads. The Wattletree Road route to Diamond Creek was an alternative route to the Caledonia goldfields, particularly when wet weather rendered the black soil at Kangaroo Ground impassable. The question is raised as to whether Cobb and Co. coaches stopped at Colemans Corner.

The submission contains the following summaries of interviews with long-standing local residents:

- 95 year old Mrs Thomas of Main Road moved to that address in 1924 as a 20 year old. She states that Colemans was the only other house in that part of Main Road when she moved there. She is a witness to the original cottage house being bricked over in the 1950's. When John Jnr married Margaret Dare and moved to Colemans in 1955, he and his father bricked over the original residence and extended it in the other direction. Her parents lived in the original part and the newly weds lived in the new part with a room for John Coleman Snr. He was a builder who died in 1969 aged 75 and who grew up in the original Coleman Cottage.

- 75 year old Ken Gaston who grew up on Edendale farm which was originally a poultry farm but is now owned and run by the Shire of Nillumbik as an educational farm for schools and visitors. He was the Captain of the Eltham rural fire brigade in 1965 when John Coleman Jnr. was burnt to death in the Eltham North bushfires serving as an unofficial volunteer. He was able to draw where the original Wattletree Road was and we have been down there and sure enough, there is still some bitumen and a remaining post from the original bridge over the Diamond Creek located near the junction of the Diamond Creek and another small creek which is further down from Research or Christmas Creek as locals refer to it. The original Main Road ran behind Colemans before the railway line was built beyond Eltham in 1912.
- Frank Martin was a volunteer with the Eltham rural fire brigade at the time of the 1965 bushfires which burnt Eltham North and Research. Frank was asked to assist with the removal of the three bodies from the back gully (now Orchard Avenue). They were badly burnt and one was found stuck under a fence as though trying to escape. Volunteers John Coleman Jnr, William Elwers and Ian Crowe were killed trying to protect Eltham from bushfire - they were local heroes. At that time, John Coleman Jnr was survived by his wife Margaret and two young children - John 11 and Vicky 2. Margaret Coleman lived in the family home until 1992 when she sold it and moved to Tasmania to be close to her son. She died in 1997 aged 65 years.



From "The Bucket" collection

The Coleman family house c.1904

Left to right Tom Newton (school teacher, nephew of Mrs Coleman), Mary Coleman (became Mrs Dawes), Mrs Mary Ann Coleman, nee Burke (mother of Jack, George and Mary), George Coleman, John (Jack) Coleman (died 1969 aged 75), father of John Jnr and father in law of Margaret (nee Dare).

- Vicky Weston (nee Coleman, daughter of John Jnr who was two when her father died) now lives in Olinda. Her mother told her that after the death of her father in 1965 there was a lengthy court case to gain compensation for all volunteer fire fighters and which took two years to settle. This was an inaugural decision as no compensation was paid prior to this case.
- Frank Burgoyne, 83 of Judge Book Village, whose grandmother, Martha Coleman, married William West who had the Research Hotel and who drove a coach from Eltham to Kangaroo Ground. It is possible that William West took over from Cobb and Co. who ran the Royal Mail through Eltham in the 1860/70's. Mrs Coleman, the widow of John Jnr, told Heather Bakos of Gastons Road that Cobb and Co. stopped at the Corner. This would have been before the 1880's because the Maroondah Highway was then constructed and used as the main route to Healesville, etc. and the goldfields/timber industries. His mother, Ethel West was born at the Research Hotel. His great grandmother was a Coleman who married a Carrucan who were related to the Sweeneys, both old Eltham families. His grandmother's era was the mid to late 1800's. Colemans were farmers last century and builders in Eltham from early this century until John died in 1965.
- Heather Bakos of Gastons Road was told by Mrs Coleman that Colemans Corner was a Cobb and Co. coach stop. There is no official stop registered between the Eltham Hotel and the Research Hotel but the road to Glen Park (now Eltham North) and Diamond Creek, called Wattletree Road would have been a link to Diamond Creek and is midway between Eltham and Research Hotels. The old bridge was located just to the west of the junction of Research Creek, also known by locals as Christmas Creek. Frank Burgoyne's account also lends support to the role of Colemans in coaches.
- Mrs Dansey, 85 of the Wattletree store to the north. She is famous for chasing away a would-be-robber by hitting him with her broom. She moved there in 1935 and she had cows in Murray's paddock and sold butter and milk to residents in Glen Park - now Eltham North.

OTHER NEWS

After a rather long display on Eltham England, our display at the Eltham Library has now been changed. Harry Gilham has arranged a display of material collected as part of his research into the history of the Eltham Primary School.

The Andrew Ross Museum is preparing for accreditation by Museums Victoria. The Museum is to be "surveyed" on 23 May. Apparently the amount of work involved is quite onerous, especially for such a small museum.

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