

**ELTHAM DISTRICT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Incorporated

No. A0016285F

728 MAIN ROAD (PO BOX 137) ELTHAM 3095

**NEWSLETTER
NO. 140 SEPTEMBER 2001**

**NEXT MEETING
8-00 PM WEDNESDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER**

**SPEAKER: HARRY GILHAM
KANGAROO GROUND WAR MEMORIAL UPDATE**

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

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**SPRING EXCURSION
THE DIAMOND CREEK
10.30 AM SUNDAY 21ST OCTOBER
LEAVES FROM ELTHAM LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE
728 MAIN ROAD, ELTHAM**

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**KANGAROO GROUND CEMETERY
150TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS
2.30 PM FRIDAY 26TH OCTOBER**

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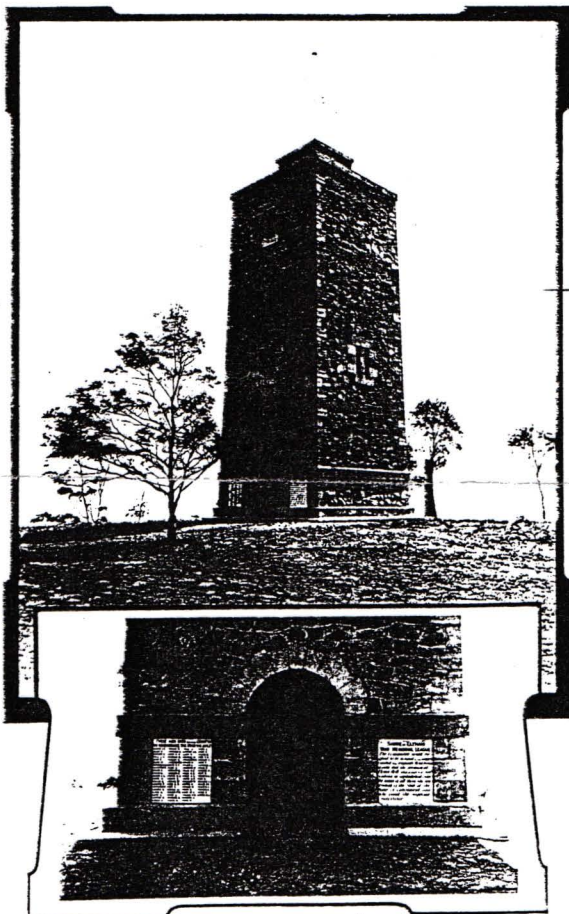
SEPTEMBER MEETING

Our President Harry Gilham is the convenor of Nillumbik Shire Council's Advisory Committee for the War Memorial at Kangaroo Ground. This committee has now been working for several years on plans for refurbishment of the Tower of Remembrance and the surrounding War Memorial Park. This has included significant research on the history of the Memorial itself and on residents of the former Shire of Eltham who served in the various armed conflicts in which Australia has been involved. The tower was erected to commemorate local servicemen of the Great War of 1914-18. Later it was rededicated to our representatives in World War 2.

The Committee is now producing plaques to commemorate the armed conflicts in Korea, Malaysia, Borneo and Vietnam. A rededication service, including unveiling of the new plaques is planned for November this year.

The plaques are being funded by public donations which at this stage are far short of the \$10,000 required. The committee has suggested that if all local residents donated a dollar the target would be readily reached. There are donation boxes at the Eltham Library.

Harry's talk will cover the history of the memorial and the work of the advisory committee. It will be illustrated by slides, drawings and war memorial memorabilia. Harry is encouraging all members to bring along a friend to hear all about this significant project.



SHIRE OF ELTHAM
SOLDIERS' WAR MEMORIAL
UNVEILED 11-11-26

This postcard of the Tower was taken between 1926 when the Honour Boards were unveiled by the Governor General (Lord Stonehaven) and 1930 when the Honour Boards were replaced with the bronze castings above the entrance. The door is shown to be made of timber with long hinge shapes. Some time before 1951 this wooden door was replaced with the current wrought iron gate.

SPRING EXCURSION - THE DIAMOND CREEK

The Diamond Creek is one of the main tributaries of the Yarra River. It drains most of the Shire of Nillumbik and most of its catchment is within the shire. The term Diamond Valley has come to mean other things. The general area includes much more than just the Diamond Creek catchment and the former Shire of Diamond Valley was mostly within the catchment of the Plenty River. The true Diamond Valley is an area of 311 square kilometres largely confined to the Shire of Nillumbik.

The Diamond Creek and its main tributaries Arthurs and Running Creeks commence at the Great Dividing Range on the Kinglake Plateau and flow into the Yarra at Eltham some 30 kilometres to the south. On the way they pass through Strathewen, Arthurs Creek, St Andrews, Cottles Bridge, Hurstbridge, Wattle Glen, Diamond Creek and Eltham North.

The upper reaches of these watercourses are largely contained in the forested areas of the Kinglake National Park. Most of the catchment comprises small rural holdings but south of Hurstbridge and, particularly at Eltham, there is extensive suburban development. Within these built up areas the immediate environs of the creek are mostly parklands and these form a significant feature of the areas through which the creek passes. The creek and its environs feature prominently in the history of Eltham and places further north. And very briefly that is the reason for our excursion on Sunday 21st October.

We will start at 10.30am at the Local History Centre. Travel will be by private car to various locations along the creek. For those who prefer not to drive and to minimise the number of cars we will arrange car pooling on the day. Ring Russell on 9439 9717 or 0409 021 063 if you have difficulty getting to the start.

We will start with the creek itself where it meets the Yarra at Lenister Farm. This involves a short walk from the car park to the viewing platform and the sculpture "Not Just a Pretty Place". The proposal is to then travel upstream stopping at various points of interest for discussion and viewing of historical photographs. The finish is rather open ended. We may reach Kinglake but that depends on how much of interest we find on the way.

Bring a picnic lunch and whatever else you need to keep you going through the day. This is a driving excursion with a series of short walks to points of interest.

DUNMOOCHIN

Three weeks ago fire destroyed Dunmoochin, the former home at Cottles Bridge of the renowned artist Clifton Pugh. Although Pugh died in 1990 this unique house has continued to be an important centre in the national art scene and contained many of the artist's works and other important memorabilia.

Dunmoochin is listed in the Shire of Eltham Heritage Study and has been designated as being of State significance although probably this should have been elevated to National significance. The citation of cultural significance states as follows:-

Dunmoochin at Cottles Bridge has historical significance as the studio residence of the nationally/internationally known artist Clifton Pugh and is the focus of a group of houses built by the artists of the Dunmoochin Artists Co-operative, which has had a powerful influence on the artistic life of Eltham and beyond. The buildings on the site and their contents from Pugh's occupancy illustrate his life for over forty years, from the struggle of the 1950s through to the affluence and fame of the later decades of his life. The evolved form and nature of the main studio residence is also a good example of the ethos, design and construction of the mud brick dwellings that are now synonymous with Eltham.



Dunmoochin
1991

An edited version of the history of Dunmoochin prepared for the Heritage Study by David Bick is as follows:-

Clifton Pugh, the founder and builder of Dunmoochin, was a pupil of the well-known artist, Sir William Dargie. After serving in the Second World War and then studying for three years at the National Gallery School, Pugh moved from the City of Melbourne to Cottles Bridge in the Eltham Shire, where he bought land from the Belot family. He purchased his first six

acres there by working for this family, but over the years accumulated more and more land in the vicinity, often persuading other artists and friends to also buy pieces of land. In 1951, Pugh purchased some old timber from the architect, Alistair Knox, who was working in the Hurstbridge area. He started on his house, later known as Dunmoochin, in September 1951. It was at first a one room wattle and daub structure, built in the manner Pugh had observed the early settlers employ in the Eltham district in the pioneering days. In 1975 Knox recalled

It consisted of eucalypt saplings set in the ground, with wattle boughs and other thin branches set horizontally and nailed in between these verticals. The building had an earth floor. There was a doorway and a second-hand window, which from recollection had cost 30 cents, built into the earth walls. The roof was flat. Four by two members that I had given him were erected as rafters and six by one as a deck. A single thickness of malthoid had been nailed over the deck with clouts. Inside there was a mud brick fireplace...

No building permits were required at that time and Knox commented that, "No building could have been simpler, cheaper or quicker to erect".

Pugh was profoundly affected by the Cottles Bridge environment. In late 1954, he travelled across the Nullarbor Plain for the first time and, according to Alan Marshall, this experience "seemed to crystallise his thoughts" about Cottles Bridge. He began, for the first time, a series of landscapes using motifs of birds and animals of the bush,

sometimes savage, but always related to the often delicate life of the bush, such as a wildflower.

These paintings were exhibited at the Victorian Artists' Society galleries in 1955, at a joint exhibition with Lawrence Daws, John Howley and Donald Laycock, and well received. His first major show, held in Melbourne in 1957, "established him as a distinctive new painter with works specifically unrelated to the European experience, yet not closely allied to any particular school of Australian painting".

Many artists, potters and musicians were attracted to the Cottles Bridge area around Pugh's Dunmoochin establishment in which members owned Land in Common, no house could be built in sight of another, and a unanimous vote was required if anything was to be changed. This meant that virtually nothing was changed, which secured the survival of the community. However, all of the land reverted to individual ownership. This Society became a strong branch of the Eltham artistic community.

By the 1980s, Pugh's original one-roomed shelter had grown into a large rambling studio residence. Knox described how,

Every wall was crowded with paintings, every corner occupied with sculpture, Sepik River carvings, a human skeleton, the skeletons of native animals and other paraphernalia that had been part of his varied interests over nearly 30 years.

Knox also described Dunmoochin in the 1980s as "a series of enormous rooms with towered ceiling". He told how he built a wing for Pugh composed of big posts and heavy timber, which was the bedroom and private area for Pugh and his third wife, Judith. According to Knox, Judith was responsible for introducing modern plumbing, good kitchens and a swimming pool into the Pugh menage. One brick studio is attached to the residence and there is a large recent detached studio building constructed of corrugated iron close by.

Features are the exotic nature of the building, its decoration, fittings and furniture, as well as the bush setting. They are too numerous to list, but some are the entrance gates, front wall attached female figure, Balinese type intricately carved front door, slide from the first floor bedroom into the swimming pool, hall/dining room with its staircase fireplace, adzed table and chairs, attached studio and the recent studio.

The destruction of this building and most of its contents is a sad loss for our local heritage. The studio remains and it is proposed to rebuild the house but it will not contribute to our heritage as did the original Pugh version.

NINA CHRISTESEN AM 1911-2001

The death on August 8th of Nina Christesen brought to a close a 59 year association with Eltham of this important academic and literary figure. Over this period she had lived with her husband Clem at Stanhope, a significant local heritage property largely because of its associations with them. Together these two represented one of Australia's foremost literary couples. Russian born Nina founded the first course in Russian at Melbourne University. Eventually under her leadership Russian Language and Literature became a department in its own right. Clem was the founder and longtime editor of the important literary magazine Meanjin Quarterly. Clem frequently acknowledged Nina's support for the magazine saying that he could not have continued without her.

Dr Judith Armstrong, author of "The Christesen Romance" concluded her obituary of Nina in The Age with:-
"In 1985 she was awarded an AM; in the same year she received from her husband a hand-drawn Christmas card, and replied:

Thank you for this card and for all that "Stanhope" has been to us in the last 40 years! I am so glad to be here with you - so happy - in this old, rambling place, with all its associations, with its lovely garden, diminishing but still beautiful grounds that you have worked so hard to improve and maintain - glad that we are still alive though creaking in the joints and deteriorating...I am grateful for it all and for my life with you, and I wouldn't change "Stanhope" for even the Winter Palace with its Hermitage."

Nina's funeral service at the Holy Virgin Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Collingwood was attended by many of her friends from the Russian and Eltham communities and the literary world. An annual student prize is to be founded at Melbourne University in honour of Nina.

Nina is survived by her loved husband Clem and we extend our great sympathy to him.

KANGAROO GROUND EVENTS

The Andrew Ross Museum held a Bushranger Dinner on Friday 31st August. Unfortunately, notification of this event did not coincide with our Newsletter but we did get the message out to some of our members. Jo McCormick attended and filed this report.

I attended the Kangaroo Ground Bushranger Dinner on the 31st August at the SES Hall in Ness Lane and I am so glad that I did. It was a splendid winter's night entertainment and a delightful community effort. The hall was full. We were packed in like sardines at the long tables lit with kerosene lamps and laden with good country food. All the neighbourhood, Kangaroo Ground, Eltham, Warrandyte were represented and the folk from the Environment Living Zone were represented there in force. Between courses of a very fine dinner we were treated to very amusing dramatic sketches recounting the bush ranger raid on the Donaldson property and ensuing events acted out with great gusto. Congratulations to all and lets hope it is a profitable night for the Andrew Ross Museum.

The 150th Anniversary celebrations of the Kangaroo Ground Cemetery are to be held on Friday 26th October at 2.30 pm. The Cemetery Trust is encouraging a large attendance and members are invited to participate in this important event. It will include the launching of Mick Woiwod's latest book on the history of the Cemetery. Details are given in the flyer attached to this Newsletter.

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION PROJECT

As part of the International Year of Volunteers Nillumbik Council has recognized volunteers in many fields of public service by a Volunteer Recognition Project. The Society successfully nominated our Treasurer, Gwen Orford, to receive an award in the Heritage category for her many years of service in this role. Other members and friends of the Society to receive awards were:-

Diana Bassett-Smith	Civic Participation and Heritage
Joh Ebeli	Arts
Beryl Read	Education
Margaret Woiwod	Heritage, Reconciliation and Environment
Mick Woiwod	Education, Heritage, Reconciliation and Environment

Congratulations to all of these people for their excellent achievements.

OTHER NEWS

This years Eltham Festival is to be held on 10th and 11th November. The theme is "Living on the Wedge - Conservation Preservation, Restoration and Celebration". We will be having an open day at our Local History Centre on Sunday 11th November. We have also expressed an interest in a proposed "Parade of Panels". Groups are asked to submit an art panel for display but we don't have further details yet. Any member who would like to be involved in this project should contact Russell Yeoman.

In the last Newsletter we reported that Richard Schurmann had floated the idea of bringing a steam train to Eltham to celebrate the Centenary of the railway in 2002. Richard and Harry Gilham have been working on the idea and plan to set up a community committee to co-ordinate the project. Watch this space for further information.

Russell Yeoman attended the workshop of the Association of Eastern Historical Societies on the storage of local history materials. It provided a great deal of information on a wide range of storage options for items ranging from photographs to newspapers. It also covered computer data bases of historical society collections. All of this is very relevant to the work that we are doing at our records workshops. These are held twice a month and we would welcome additional participants. Dates for the next two months are:-

— Mondays 9.30am	17th September, 15th October
Tuesdays 7.30pm	2nd October

The Federal Government has introduced legislation to abandon the Register of the National Estate. It seems that there is intended to be a new National Heritage List but that places currently on the Register of the National Estate will not necessarily be included in the new list. Local member Jenny Macklin has organized a petition of support for the current register. This will be available at the September meeting for members wishing to sign it.

Harry Gilham
President

Phone - 9439 1175

Russell Yeoman
Secretary

Phone - 9439 9717

Gwen Orford
Treasurer /
Membership Secretary
Phone 9439 8642

KANGAROO GROUND CEMETERY

1851- 2001

**150th ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATIONS**

**OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE NEW ROTUNDA
FRIDAY 26/10/2001 AT 2.30 PM**

Pre-orders of the book on the history of the cemetery will be taken

**LAUNCH OF MICK WOIWOD'S LATEST BOOK
ON THE HISTORY OF THE CEMETERY**

Followed by

MOONLIGHT TOUR

Of the

**HISTORIC SECTION OF THE CEMETERY
SUNDAY 28/10/2001 AT 7.15 PM**

**ENJOY THE TOUR, WHICH WILL FEATURE, POETRY READINGS, AN
INSIGHT INTO OUR HISTORY AND WILL CONCLUDE WITH WINE AND
CHEESE**

TOUR COST IS \$5.00 A HEAD AND \$10.00 FOR FAMILIES

**Proceeds of tour and book sales will be devoted to historic grave
restoration**

For further details contact

Vicki White 97120363

David Webb 97120311