

**ELTHAM DISTRICT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Incorporated

No. A0016285F

728 MAIN ROAD (PO BOX 137) ELTHAM 3095

**NEWSLETTER
NO. 141 NOVEMBER 2001**

**NEXT MEETING
8-00 PM WEDNESDAY 14TH NOVEMBER**

**A TRIP DOWN THE DIAMOND CREEK
A SLIDE SHOW BY RUSSELL YEOMAN**

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

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**CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION
BYO BARBECUE
6.30 PM WEDNESDAY 12TH DECEMBER
ELTHAM LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE
728 MAIN ROAD, ELTHAM**

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**ELTHAM FESTIVAL
10TH & 11TH NOVEMBER
LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE OPEN DAY
SUNDAY 11TH, 1PM TO 5 PM**

NOVEMBER MEETING

The Diamond Creek as the main tributary of the Yarra River within the Eltham area and the Shire of Nillumbik, features prominently in the history of our area and in many early photographs. The creek and its valley presented both obstacles and opportunities to early European explorers and settlers. Early low level bridges were regularly damaged by floods which made travel across the creek difficult. But the valleys of the creek and its tributaries were where settlement occurred because (apart from Kangaroo Ground) that is where the best soil occurred. Alluvial gold from the Diamond Creek and its tributaries was a major factor in the settlement of our area. The creek valley provided an ideal line of communication which eventually saw the road extended right to the head of the valley at Kinglake. In the early 1900's the railway was extended along the valley from Eltham to Hurstbridge.

Many of these activities were recorded in early photos and by artists. These pictures from our Society collection and the Eltham Library have been copied onto slides. These historic views, together with a series of recent slides, will form the basis of a slide show trip down the Diamond Creek at our November meeting. Russell Yeoman will introduce the slides with a brief commentary but it is the slides themselves which are the feature of this meeting. They include views of the creek itself and many of its former and present day bridges. There are views adjacent to the creek including some of the more interesting buildings and the Council's art installations in the valley parklands.

The Spring excursion along the creek was curtailed in length due to poor attendance. For those who were not able to attend, this meeting presents an opportunity to become acquainted with scenes of early years and the present day along the Diamond Creek.



Diamond Creek floods, Eltham South 1934, Photo Peter Bassett-Smith

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

Following the successful formula of recent years we will be having a B.Y.O. barbecue at the Local History Centre commencing at 6.30pm on Wednesday 12 December. Although members should bring their own food and drinks there will be the usual excellent selection of home-made wines by President Harry Gilham. There is no formal activity scheduled for the evening but members are invited to bring along any historical items for discussion.

The adjacent Court House will be open for inspection. This will be especially useful if the weather is not suitable for sitting outside. A gathering in the Court House with readings from some early court cases would be an ideal way to deal with that situation.

THE MEMORIAL TOWER, KANGAROO GROUND - RE-DEDICATION

At about the time this Newsletter is in the mail - Thursday 8 November - a ceremony will be taking place at Kangaroo Ground to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Memorial Tower and to re-dedicate it to those who served in Armed Conflicts between 1948 and 1972. The public is invited to the ceremony at 11.30am on that day when the Governor of Victoria, Mr John Landy, will unveil the recently installed commemorative plaques. The ceremony is to include a Welcome by Wurundjeri Elder, Jim Wandin. Harry Gilham as convenor of the Advisory Committee for the Memorial will outline the history of the tower and park, a function he performed at some greater length when he spoke at our September meeting.

In addition to the memorial plaques attached to the tower, there is to be a separate free standing plaque to commemorate the history of the tower itself. The content of that plaque, including a sketch of the tower by Kenneth Jack, is reproduced on the last page of the Newsletter.

The new plaques, the recent upgrading of the surrounding park, proposed further interpretive panels and the intended lower level viewing platform will add to the value of the Memorial and will promote the appreciation of the site by local residents and visitors alike.

ELTHAM FESTIVAL

This year's Eltham Festival will be held on 10th and 11th November with associated events spread over the week before and after. The theme for the festival is "Living on the Wedge".

We will open the Local History Centre on Sunday 11th from 1pm to 5pm with a display of a wide range of local history photos and documents. The Andrew Ross Museum will have books for sale. Members and the general public are invited to inspect the display and the Society's collection of material. The Court House will also be open for inspection.

Any member who can help with manning the centre and talking to visitors is asked to come at 1pm or at any stage during the afternoon.

The wide range of other Festival events is included in the program which has been distributed to homes in the area.

2002 EVENTS

Planning is proceeding for the celebration of two centenaries in 2002 - the opening of the Heidelberg to Eltham railway and the birth of author Alan Marshall.

Richard Schurmann has had positive responses from railway authorities to the proposal to run a vintage steam train between Eltham and Heidelberg in early June. He is following up his letters with several meetings with key people in coming weeks.

The Society has applied to Nillumbik Council for a cultural development grant to finance a plaque for the Alan Marshall reserve at the corner of Main Road and Leane Drive. We have agreed to a request by the Council to arrange an Alan Marshall exhibition in the Eltham Library foyer during April and May.

We also plan to produce a CD from the audio tapes of Alan Marshall that have been provided by Les Harsant of Healesville Historical Society.

Celebrations of Alan's Centenary will be co-ordinated with others at Black Rock where he lived for his final years and at Noorat where he was born. We have received a significant amount of research material from Sandringham Historical Society which is involved with the Black Rock event.

"ESCAPING THE BIG SMOKE"

This is the title of a booklet to be published by the Association of Eastern Historical Societies for the Victorian Heritage Festival in 2002. Each member society is to contribute articles (250 to 500 words) on excursions or the like, from the city to their area.

Ideas which come to mind for our area are Gould League bird days at Eltham Lower Park, artists' painting excursions, Wattle Day excursions, etc. Anyone who could write on one of these subjects, or anything else appropriate is asked to contact Russell Yeoman.

The Association is also preparing a list of speakers for the benefit of member societies. Anyone prepared to talk to other societies on their favourite subject should also contact Russell.

KANGAROO GROUND HAPPENINGS Diana Bassett-Smith

Three significant events occurred in Kangaroo Ground, one Friday 30 August when the Andrew Ross Museum held a Bushranger Night. The meal was accompanied by a play starring local players depicting the history of the event when the Donaldson homestead at Kangaroo Ground was held up. It was lots of fun with guests appropriately dressed. The Eltham Historical Society was well represented, Lilas Scales brought a bed warmer rescued from the ashes of her mother's home Sunnybrook, razed by fire in 1957. Others who enjoyed the evening were Gwen and Doug Orford, Jo McCormick and Peter and Diana Bassett-Smith, Peter hardly recognisable in his bushy red beard. The play was written by Peter Oysten and Mick Woiwod. Peter is currently in London with another play that he has written. He was commended by the Queen when she attended a play he had on in London. Peter promises more fun with the Museum in the future.

A lot of hard work by everyone involved led to the ultimate enjoyment of the evening which was a financial success and to the ultimate benefit of the project for refurbishing of the Museum. A video of the Bushranger Evening has been produced and copies are available from the Museum for \$20.

The next happening was on Friday 26 October at the Kangaroo Ground Cemetery which has built new facilities for its 150th celebrations. Peter Bassett-Smith second President of the Society and a former trustee of the Cemetery unveiled a plaque naming the Ness Stevenson Rotunda. It was named after the Stevenson family, original settlers of Kangaroo Ground and the Ness family, descendants of Stevenson and long time trustees of the Cemetery. Of course Bruce and Joy Ness are well known to earlier members of our Society. In spite of the rain the event was well attended. The rotunda was designed by Frank Marsden of Eltham and the builder was Brad Lawrence.

Two days later on 28th the Kangaroo Ground Cemetery was again the focus of attention, this time as part of its 150th celebrations for the launch of its history written by Mick Woiwod. This book "Tread Softly You Tread on Dreams" is well presented in the usual Mick style and traces the history from the need to establish a cemetery to its first burial and right through to present times. The Health Department representative, Mayor Cr Sigmund Jorgensen, Nillumbik CEO Catherine Dale, present and former trustees, friends and relations were all welcomed by Don Thomson, the present Chairman. A lot of work has gone into maintenance of the Cemetery, particularly since the resolution of the Watsons Creek Dam proposal.

Some 160 people enjoyed a moonlight walk past candlelit graves, stopping every so often when Mick related the history of the one buried there. Also poems were read recalling the times. A memorable evening was enjoyed by all finishing with wine, cheese, and the traditional country cakes, coffee and tea around a barbecue fire. The area was controlled and the fire lit by the ever helpful members of the Kangaroo Ground Fire Brigade. The Eltham Historical society was well represented by Harry Gilham and others.

Mick's book is available for \$ 25 with proceeds going to the Cemetery. It will be available at the November meeting. It is a good read and a very interesting one.

Did you read about refurbishment? Yes more details are still to come from the Museum so watch your Newsletter. Museum Chairman Bruce Nixon has not been well and we wish him a steady recovery. In the meantime Peter Fleming is chairing board meetings. Have you seen the garden around the Museum? The school has been very busy and the area is a students delight.

OTHER MATTERS

Donations for our historical records come from a variety of sources. Recent donations include two photo postcards of the Eltham South bridge in the 1930's sent by the Blessed Sacrament Fathers of St Francis Church, Melbourne. These views have not previously been in either the Society or Eltham Library collections.

The Eltham Football Club has donated copies of the Panther Year Book 2000 and 2001 which contain historical as well as current information.

The next records workshop at the Local History Centre will be at 9.30am on Monday 19 November. We have scheduled an extra Committee meeting in place of the workshop at 7.30pm on Tuesday 4 December. Anyone wanting to work on or research records is welcome to come on that evening.

Harry Gilham
President

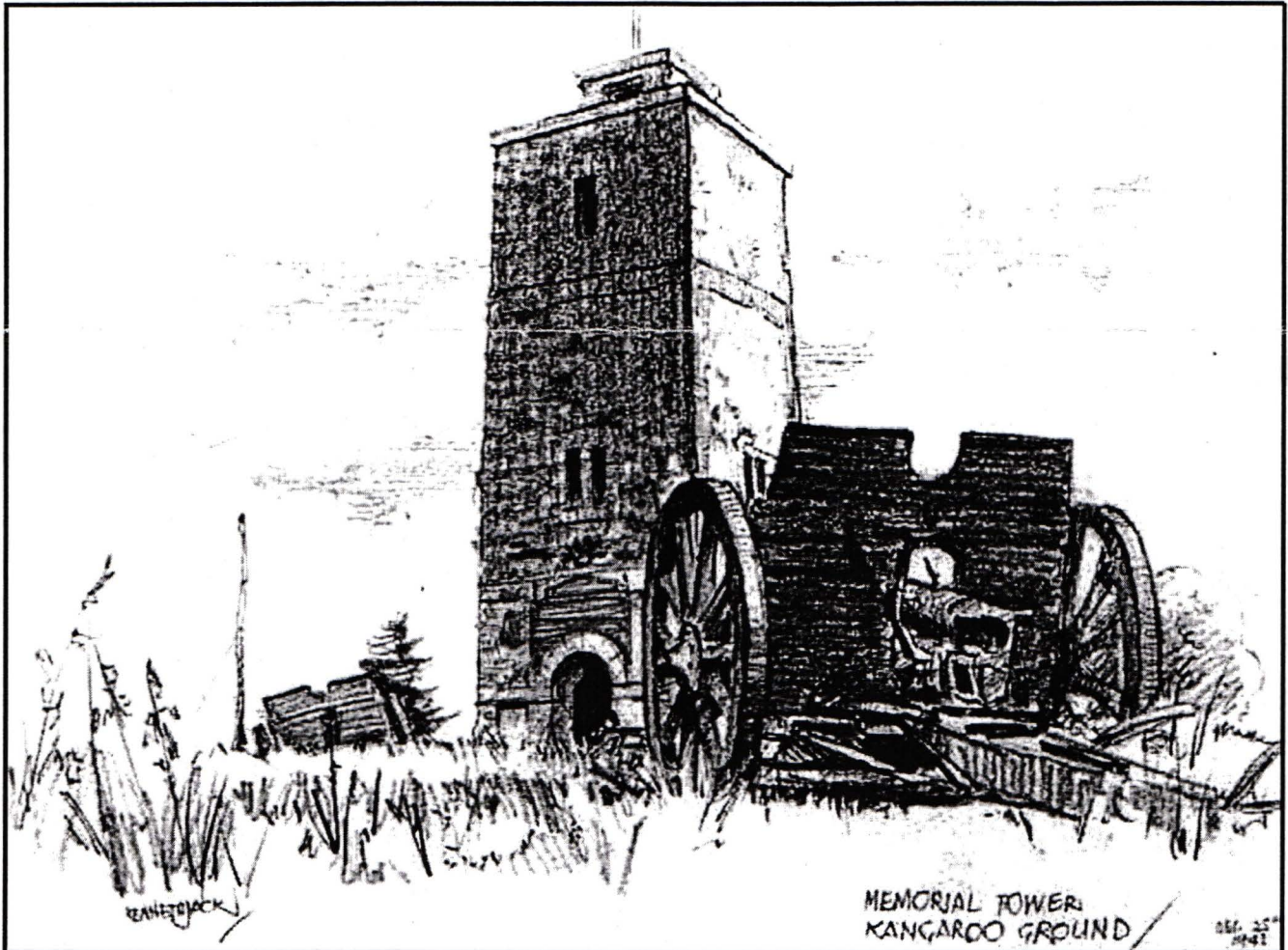
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KANGAROO GROUND MEMORIAL TOWER



Kenneth Jack "Memorial Tower" Kangaroo Ground (pencil sketch Dec. 25, 1943). Courtesy of the Artist and his wife.

"On the summit of that central and conspicuous landmark Garden Hill, there is being erected a massive tower, which will for all time, remind every passerby of the part played by the men of the Shire of Eltham in the Great War.

The work has been undertaken by the people of the Shire as a tribute of the love and admiration for those who were known and dear to us in the days of their youth and early manhood, who went out from amongst us never to return and whose self sacrifice has made us each and all, their everlasting debtors."

**Cr H. Rutter, Chairman of the Shire of Eltham
Soldiers' Memorial League, public circular
October 1926.**

The Shire of Eltham War Memorial Tower was unveiled by His Excellency the Governor-General (Lord Stonehaven) on Armistice Day 11-11-1926 (Argus Newspaper)