



ELTHAM DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Incorporated

No. A0016285F

728 MAIN ROAD (PO BOX 137) ELTHAM 3095

NEWSLETTER

NO. 150 MAY 2003

NEXT MEETING

8-00 PM WEDNESDAY 14TH MAY

**GUEST SPEAKER: MEERA GOVIL
ELTHAM LITERARY CONNECTIONS**

ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZENS' CENTRE

903 MAIN ROAD ELTHAM

(ENTER FROM OLD SHIRE OFFICE DRIVEWAY)

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PLENTY GORGE EXCURSION

10AM SUNDAY 18TH MAY



MAY MEETING

Eltham and surrounding areas are well known for their artistic and literary connections. In the past there have been literary figures of the stature of Alan Marshall and Frank Dalby Davidson. The tradition continues with many modern writers making the area their home. In recent years the Eltham Book Shop and its proprietor Meera Govil have developed something of a tradition in their own right. Their highly successful book launchings and literary functions have become part of the Eltham social scene. They often feature local writers and also bring to our area other writers of importance and interest.

Meera's talk will be based on her literary events which are held at the bookshop or other locations such as Montsalvat, the Eltham Library or the town square. She will talk about some of the featured writers such as poet Ian McBryde, children's author Archimede Fusillo, well-known author Don Charlwood and African musician Valonga Khosya. Then there is also our own Mick Woiwod, writer on local history and historical fiction. Meera will bring examples of the books themselves to illustrate her talk.

PLENTY GORGE EXCURSION

This excursion on Sunday 18th May is being run in conjunction with Plenty Historical Society. They are providing historical background and Russell Yeoman is acting as guide to the walking tracks in the area. The excursion will comprise a series of short walks to locations of historical interest. These will include the ruins of the Bell house, the Blue Lake and a view across the gorge to the site of Colstock's (Brock's) Flour Mill. The walks will be between one and three kilometres each and you can do as few or as many as you like. Good walking shoes or boots are recommended.

We will be meeting at Plenty Hall, Memorial Drive (Melway 11 D5) at 10 am to drive to several nearby locations. Bring a picnic lunch to have at Yellow Gum Park (you won't need to walk carrying lunch). Ring Russell on 9349 9717 for more information or if you need transport.

WAR MEMORIALS IN AUSTRALIA

Michael Southwell-Keely lives in Canberra but is a member of our Society. He has established an internet site under the above title with comprehensive details and history of war memorials throughout the country. The Victorian list contains detailed descriptions of more than ninety memorials.

The entry for the Tower of Remembrance at Kangaroo Ground contains six pages of information including the names on the memorial plaques. The site may be accessed at <http://www.skp.com.au/memorials/pages/listvic.htm>.

WALTER WITHERS IN 1903

This year marks the centenary of when the renowned artist Walter Withers came to Eltham to live. The Withers family had previously lived in Heidelberg. Walter's wife Fanny, writing in her manuscript "The Life and Work of Walter Withers, Landscape Painter-Melbourne" (published as part of "Walter Withers, The Forgotten Manuscripts" by Andrew Mackenzie) says that he moved to escape the ever-growing suburban appearance of Heidelberg.

She goes on:

This place where he elected to build yet another Studio, was on the outskirts of Eltham, also a beautiful English-looking village, one of the earliest settlements in Victoria, with the primitive houses still standing, and still inhabited by the early settlers, or by their children; themselves married, with children and grandchildren of their own.

The place abounded in new subjects. An old English Church, with the vicarage in the same grounds – Hedges of hawthorn and Monthly roses; poplars, oaks, elms; ivy growing over brick buildings; foot bridges over the creek; a public park of ideal beauty, studded with magnificent gum trees; the semblance of a village green in the tennis courts, lying at the side of the main road, with the creek nearby; everything a painter could wish.

A small well-built cottage, with an orchard in full bearing; old sheds for cattle and a paddock of 2 ½ acres for a cow, constituted the small holding bought for the new home, to which was added a fine studio, picturesquely designed and furnished as to its interior, with a small stair-case leading to the hall and the added charm of an inglenook, and an open brick hearth, on which big logs burnt on Winter nights. The Studio, living rooms and entrance hall, being panelled [sic] with dark wood.

A large estate of 1000 acres lies opposite, within a few yards of this new home, and some magnificent white gums adorned the sloping sides of undulating landscape, while small saplings grow closely together on the higher ground, giving a bush-like look to the place.

This then was the painting ground for the last eleven years of the painter's life. No more beautiful, no more diversified spot could have been found. And here his out-put of work was prodigious, and his sale of paintings continuous.

The Withers' house "Southernwood" remains today at the corner of Brougham and Bolton Streets.

On 30th March Russell Yeoman led a group of 20 people from the Nillumbik Living and Learning Centres on a walk from Eaglemont to Eltham visiting sites associated with Withers. These included his homes at Eaglemont and Eltham and many Withers sites on the Heidelberg School Artists' Trail. For our Spring excursion on 12th October we plan to do a car-based tour along similar lines. We will probably leave off some of the Artists' trail sites which we have already visited but include the sites of Withers' homes in Heidelberg and his grave at St Helena. There will be more information in the September Newsletter.

OFFICE BEARERS 2003/2004

At the Annual General Meeting on 12 March all office bearers were re-elected for a further twelve months. They are:

President	-	Harry Gilham
Senior Vice President		Doug Orford
Junior Vice President		Jim Connor
Secretary		Russell Yeoman
Treasurer/Membership Secretary		Gwen Orford
Committee		Diana Bassett-Smith, Sue Law, Jan Macauley, Jo McCormick, Jock Read, Mary Regan

Contact numbers for principal office bearers are given at the end of the Newsletter.

SUBSCRIPTIONS 2003/2004

Subscriptions are set at the Annual General Meeting and are payable on 1st July. They may be paid in advance of that date and Gwen would be happy to accept them at the May meeting. They may be sent to our post office box or direct to Gwen Orford, 125 Napoleon Street Eltham 3095.

This year we have introduced a separate newsletter Subscription item for the benefit of people who cannot attend meetings through distance, failing health or other reasons. It is totally at your discretion whether you choose to just pay the newsletter subscription or remain as an ordinary member. A further membership category of Business Organization has also been introduced.

Subscriptions are as follows:-

Adults	-	\$15.00
Students	-	\$ 2.00
Family	-	\$20.00
Business Organisation	-	\$25.00
Newsletter	-	\$10.00

LIFE MEMBERS

Two new Life Members of the Society were appointed at the Annual General Meeting.

Opal Smith, a long time resident of Montmorency was a Committee member for many years including some years as Treasurer and Membership Secretary.

Jock Read came to Eltham as a small child and has lived here for most of his 87 years. He has been a Committee member for many years and was re-elected to that position at the Annual General Meeting.

Congratulations to both Opal and Jock on their appointment as Life Members and thanks to both for their outstanding contribution to the Society over many years. Life Membership certificates will be presented to them at the next appropriate meeting.

OTHER NEWS

Our computer program DB Text Works is now installed and ready for catalogue entries. Any member who can assist with this with expertise of data base use or just typing in entries would be most welcome. Please contact Russell if you can help. We will be continuing with our records workshop sessions and one of the tasks over coming months will be to input entries to the system.

Dates over the next two months are:-

Mondays 9.30 am	19 th May	16 th June
Tuesdays 7.30 pm	3 rd June	1 st July

Members are urged to come along and assist with this important work.

The Autumn edition of the *Kangaroo Ground Chronicle*, published by the Andrew Ross Museum is now available. Copies will be available at the May meeting. This most interesting magazine type newsletter contains stories of history of Kangaroo Ground from various local contributors.

Harry Gilham
President

Russell Yeoman
Secretary

Gwen Orford
Treasurer /
Membership Secretary
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Phone 9439 1175

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