



ELTHAM DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Incorporated

No. A0016285F

728 MAIN ROAD (PO BOX 137) ELTHAM 3095

NEWSLETTER

NO. 151 JULY 2003

NEXT MEETING

8-00 PM WEDNESDAY 9TH MAY

**GUEST SPEAKER: JOHN MC CUTCHAN
A PIONEER HYDRO-ELECTRIC SCHEME**

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

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JULY MEETING

In our efforts to present a varied program at meetings we often deal with our own local history, sometimes local interest stories of a less historical nature and also more general historical items. For this meeting we will hear about an historical project in another part of Victoria by a local resident. John McCutchan of Lower Plenty is a former lecturer in electrical engineering at the University of Melbourne.

In 1979/80 John carried out extensive research into an early hydro-electric scheme which provided power for a gold mine near Omeo in the mountains of eastern Victoria. His talk will cover non-technical aspects of this interesting scheme and the fascinating "treasure hunt" which unearthed a surprising amount of information about it. It will be illustrated by slides, both 1908-1916 and modern.

The hydro scheme was built in 1908 on the Cobungra River to provide power to a mine at Cassilis, fifteen miles away. John's research included full technical information but in this talk he will concentrate on the human interest aspects including:-

- the reasons for using hydro power instead of steam from a wood fired boiler;
- the achievements in getting the plant built and operating in eighteen months under severe local conditions;
- the fate of the mine after conversion and the excuses given for failures;
- the subsequent history of the hydro plant at Magnet, Tasmania from 1917 to 1941.

TRIBUTE TO ALAN MARSHALL

(Presented at the S.E.S. Hall, Kangaroo Ground on May 10th)

The event was based on Alan's book *This is the Grass*. The Andrew Ross Museum obtained the rights to use extracts. Peter James became our producer, Peter Oyston, well known artist and playwright created the imaginative script and directed the play. The lighting was under the professional control of Allan James. The all star studded cast, headed by well-known local actor of stage and TV, Dennis Coard playing Alan, looking so like him with moustache, a pipe, glasses and a wooden crutch.

Dennis was so ably supported by those amazing actors we have residing in Kangaroo Ground. They consisted of the youngest being under ten to the ageless.

The evening was a sell out too, many guests arriving in 1920's dress which all added to the entertainment.

The setting with the potato cart, i.e. pie man, and stage décor creating the atmosphere of K.G. Hotel and the city, candle lit tables with projected backdrops of 1920/30's Melbourne, set our imaginations flowing, together with local wines which were BYO. We were served with great hot food from the Pie Kitchen and Potato Van, followed by lamingtons and drinks. Thanks to the capable Museum Caterers. Young and old were soon replete. The meal was interspersed by the play and the incidental sound of the concertina and children singing.

The raffle main prize was a signed copy of Alan's book, *Pioneers and Painters*, won by recent arrivals in Kangaroo Ground. At least ten of the audience won the minor prizes, all generously donated including several extra donations which arrived during the evening so adding to the rural atmosphere of the depression days. Jo McCormick won the "The pedigreed horse fertilizer". I believe her winning five bags were further supplemented after John and Shan saw her beautiful garden. Ceyreste Alpaccas were not to be outdone, they too have contributed to a garden. Another prize was a corde of wood. That set everyone racking their brains – how much in a corde? (see below) Harry's Wine, Horse Feed, Meat, Eggs and more wine all added to the fun.

A video was made which could be shown at one of our Society meetings and so add to our memories of Alan and remind us of early days in Kangaroo Ground and Melbourne.

Diana Bassett-Smith.

4' x 4' x 8' = 1 corde, i.e. 128 cubic feet

EULOGY FOR BLANCHE

Most of us have our special memories of Blanche Shallard who died last year. At her funeral service there were a number of moving eulogies from family members and friends and copies of these have now been provided for our Society records. We do not have the space to publish them all in our Newsletter but we have selected one delivered by Blanche's son-in-law, Knowles Kerry, because of the excellent picture it gives of Blanche's long and interesting life.

I have known Blanche for 44 years and although this may seem a long time it is less than half of her life span of 97 years. To cover the other 53 years I have had to draw on a number of sources. The most impeccable was of course Blanche herself who was able to recall family history in great detail.

Blanche Emily Everard was born in Camberwell in 1905. Over the next 17 years she acquired two brothers Hugh and Howard and two sisters Evelyn and Betty. Blanche recalled the household as being lively and not conducive to study. None of us who have attended family gatherings even to the present could doubt the use of this adjective.

The Everard children were fortunate in having a father who believed in good education and sent them all to private schools. Blanche spent her early school years at Stratherne and completed secondary school at PLC where she was made Head Prefect in 1923. She was fortunate to gain a "Free Place" to attend Melbourne University in 1924. She completed an Arts degree majoring in History and English and then a Diploma of education. Her graduation was a major achievement at a time when few women attended university. Along the way she represented the University in basketball.

There was another interest at the University. It was here that she met Jack Shallard, a Law student who was to become the love of her life. Despite a decision to marry they had to wait several years. Times were tough and they were caught in the depression. Blanche had a job teaching at Ivanhoe Grammar but such were the ways then, that she was forced to resign at the end of 1931 on the announcement of their engagement. They were married finally at Holy Trinity Kew in December 1933. Jack in the intervening years had been developing his law practice with Blanche giving secretarial assistance. The potential marriage and her secretarial career nearly foundered with Blanche's typing the now famous letter about a will addressed to "Dead madam". I can still see her smiling as she tells it.

After a honeymoon in the Blue Mountains and Sydney Jack and Blanche rented a house at the corner of Wellington and Binns Streets in Montmorency. In 1936 they moved into their new house a hundred metres up the road on the corner of Wellington Street and Rattray Road. This is still the family home. At the conclusion of this service according to Blanche's wish we hope that you will all be able to join us there.

Blanche's daughter Margaret was 5 months old when they moved into the house. Elizabeth joined the family a few years later in 1939. Life could not have been easy for Blanche for the next few years. With the outbreak of war

Jack joined the Air Force and was posted interstate and overseas. Her independent nature saw her through this and many other times.

Jack and Blanche also believed strongly in education and sent both girls to PLC and then to the University of Melbourne, where Margaret studied Science and Elizabeth Agricultural Science. Progressive as this was I am not sure they fully realized the implication of the latter. Elizabeth spent the second year of her course at Dookie Agricultural College as the one of six women among 160 men. I am pleased to say that I was the one in the 160 men. In time I visited the Shallards at Montmorency and had my first cup of tea. I wonder how many cups of tea Blanche has made since. We all loved those times sitting across the table sipping tea, chatting and reminiscing. Just two weeks ago I arrived at Blanche's house at 5.30 in the morning after a long flight. She was there with that cup of tea. The following morning at an equally early hour I made here a cup of tea and left for home in Tasmania. It was to be our last.

Blanche was ecstatic with the arrival of grand-children Pam and Angela to Liz and myself and Kathryn and Russell to Margaret and Don. She was so proud of them and in turn they of her.

Blanche has always been a community minded person with a deep involvement in the church and affairs within the district. Her involvement in this part of the state goes back to the 1920's long before she lived in the Shire. Her father Bill Everard was the member for Evelyn (now Jika Jika) and Speaker in the state House of Assembly. She would accompany him on official business around the electorate which incorporated Greensborough, Eltham and Diamond Creek. The shire was of course Eltham but now much to the annoyance of Blanche her property became part of Banyule. The only other time I heard her splutter (note not swearing) was when the new council suggested that Cootamundra wattles were weeds in the district and implied that hers should be removed. She did indeed love the bush and was ahead of her time in planting her garden with native plants and encouraging the native birds. Many families of magpie have been raised to feed on the back lawn and give delight to visitors young and old.

It may seem hard today for some to see a life at home with the family and not pursuing a career. Blanche was a wonderful teacher and inspired her students by bringing history alive. But she chose her career to be her family and community service. She gave all in a quiet but often determined way and behind the scenes to many areas including the Greensborough Community Hospital, the church particularly St Faiths and the Montmorency State School. She was also a keen member of the Eltham Historical Society but I suggest she was not just a member but indeed part of the history.

When Jack died in 1991 Blanche was devastated but with that inner strength and resilience she made the most of life. Fiercely determined she remained in her home and looked after herself until the end. Her days were punctuated by many visits from dear friends, her children, grandchildren and over the last two years by her great grandchild Jack.

In that wonderful way of a giving person Blanche touched and enriched our lives. Blanche, we the family, and we your friends shall miss you, but how fortunate we are to have had you amongst us for so long.

MORE ON ALAN MARSHALL

Last year during the commemoration of the centenary of the birth of Alan Marshall, Vivienne Turner of Eltham recalled that her family had a photo of Alan and his caravan at Research but it could not be located at the time. The photo has now been located and a copy provided to the Society.

Alan owned land at Research and often lived there in his caravan while he was writing. A story about this land is told by John Morrison in *The Writer and the Swagman* which appears in his book *Australian by Choice*.

Local people also remember Alan living in his caravan beside the house of his friend, artist Neil Douglas on the site of the present day Eltham College oval.



LOTS OF OTHER NEWS

Nillumbik Council has allocated \$4500 as a Heritage Grant to be divided between the ten historical societies and similar organizations in the shire. We will be receiving \$450 which the committee has decided will be mainly devoted to copying of photo collections for our records. We are grateful to the Council for this assistance.

On 24th August Russell Yeoman will be leading a walk along the route of the old Maroondah Aqueduct from Research to the Plenty River at Greensborough. This is a day walk of about 14km and return will be by train from Greensborough. Enquiries and bookings may be made through the Panton Hill or Eltham Living and Learning Centres.

We are continuing with our records workshops which are slowly bringing our records management systems up to modern day standards. Members are encouraged to attend these workshops to assist with the task or to become involved with the use of our records for their own local history projects. Coming workshops are as follows:

Mondays 9.30am

21 July, 18 August

Tuesdays 7.30pm

5 August, 2 September

In addition to these dates we have arranged for Vicki Court of Knox Historical Society to provide training for our DB Textworks cataloguing programme. This will be on Saturday 12 July at 2.00pm. Because of space limitations we can only accommodate a small group but anyone with a particular interest in this aspect of our activities will be most welcome. Of course, all of these activities will be at our local history centre.

Don't forget that subscriptions for 2002/3 are due on 1 July. Many members have paid theirs already. Details and a membership renewal form were included in the May Newsletter.

Members of Camberwell Historical Society are planning to visit Eltham on 20 September. They will visit Montsalvat in the morning and we will show them some of our points of interest in the afternoon. Further details will be provided in the September Newsletter.

Recent Society activities have included the very successful May meeting where Meera Govil from the Eltham bookshop spoke about Eltham's literary connections including her own contribution by way of her literary events at the bookshop and other venues. We joined with Plenty Historical Society for an excursion to the Plenty Gorge area which involved a series of short walks into the gorge. More than 40 people attended this event, the majority being members and friends from the Plenty society.

Diana and Peter Bassett-Smith contribute to the operation and assets of the Society in many ways. Most recently they have donated a copy of Peter Cuffley's book *Family History Comes to Life*. They have also arranged for the Society to receive a copy of an honours thesis by Heath Paynter of Eltham. This well researched study is entitled *Bohemia on the Urban Fringe, Eltham 1930's-1950's*. It examines the alternative lifestyle which emerged in Eltham during that period with particular emphasis on Montsalvat. Thanks to Diana and Peter for their continuing contribution to the Society.

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