

ELTHAM DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Incorporated

No. A0016285F

728 MAIN ROAD (PO BOX 137) ELTHAM 3095

NEWSLETTER

NO. 154 JANUARY 2004

NEXT MEETING

8-00 PM WEDNESDAY 11TH FEBRUARY

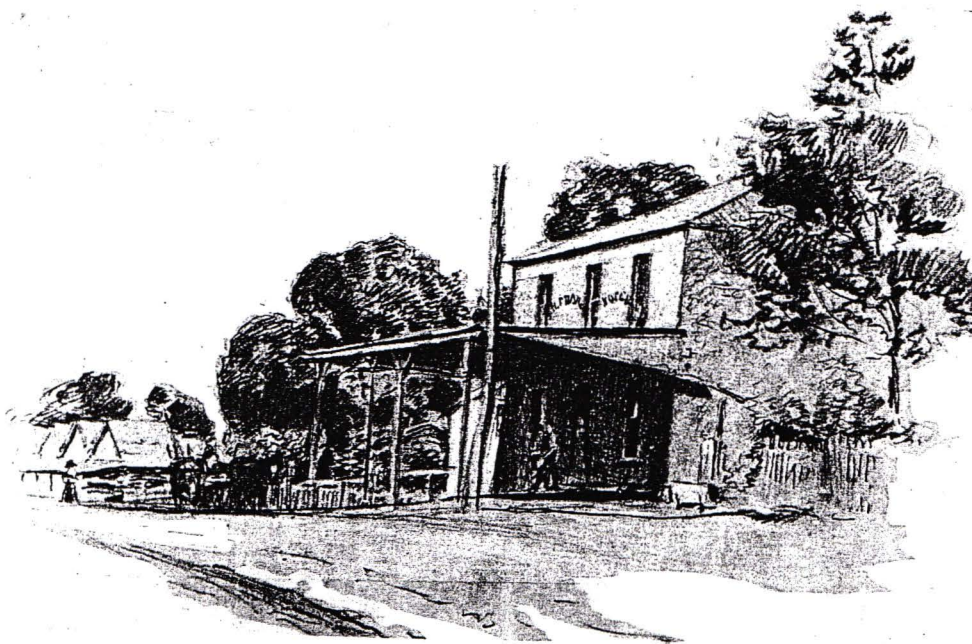
"DIRT FARMING" DISCUSSION

IDEAS FOR NILLUMBIK HERITAGE WEEK

ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZENS' CENTRE

903 MAIN ROAD ELTHAM

(ENTER FROM OLD SHIRE OFFICE DRIVEWAY)



Watson's Eltham Hotel - From Walter Withers' Sketchbook

FEBRUARY MEETING

This meeting is planned as a lead up to the proposed Nillumbik Heritage Week in March. The organisational details of the event are separately discussed below. This meeting will discuss some of the material to be used and generally seek ideas from members.

The concept of the "Dirt Farming" combined expo came from Pam Lawson of the Hurstbridge and District Local History Group. Pam will give a short talk on her idea of dirt farming – subsistence farming on small blocks, orchards on dry hillsides and other early farming stories. We will also discuss the offer of mud brick maker Richard Provan to assist with our part of the display.

This will be an informal chat evening so come along with your ideas or just to listen.

SOCIETY PROGRAM 2004

Welcome to our first Newsletter for 2004 and happy new year to all of our members and other readers. We have a busy year of activities as detailed in the program included with this Newsletter. The main activity will be Nillumbik Heritage Week, details of which are the subject of a separate article.

At our Annual General Meeting in March we will hear from Harold Bird OAM on his experience over many years with the National Boys Choir. This continues an occasional series where we hear from members or other local residents on their experiences, travel or achievements.

For our other meetings we have arranged an interesting and varied series of speakers and other activities. There is no excursion in the first half of the year because we will probably be putting our energies into the heritage week events. An excursion on Dennis Ward's Batman Trail at Greensborough will be arranged for later in the year. Harry's President's Notes list a number of anniversaries coming up during the year and more will be said about these in coming Newsletters.

We will continue with our historical workshops at the Local History Centre. A significant part of work is the computerised cataloguing of items which is proceeding slowly. Next dates for workshops are Monday 16th February at 9.30am and Tuesday 2nd March at 7.30pm. Members are encouraged to come along at these times to assist with the task.

Any additions or changes to our program will be notified in the Newsletter throughout the year.

NILLUMBIK HERITAGE WEEK 2004

During the latter part of 2003 all of the historical societies and similar organisations in the Shire of Nillumbik attended a series of combined meetings arranged by Nillumbik Shire Council. The meetings were arranged by Sandra Davis, the Council's Arts and Cultural Services Co-ordinator and Jessica Neath, the Community Events Officer. In addition to our own society, meetings have been attended by representatives of five other historical societies, Nillumbik (Diamond Creek), Plenty, Yarrambat and Warrandyte, the Hurstbridge and District Local History Group, St Andrews/Queenstown Cemetery Trust and the Andrew Ross Museum. Our society was represented by Harry Gilham and Russell Yeoman. Some of the meetings have been attended by representatives of the RHSV, National Trust and the State Department of Regional Development.

The principal outcome of meetings so far has been the decision to organise a Nillumbik Heritage Week to run from Friday 26th March to Sunday 4th April. The main event will be a combined heritage "expo" from 26th to 28th March, to be held in the Panton Hill Hall. The theme will be "Dirt Farming" which derives from the subsistence farming activities of the early settlers but could be widened to include gold mining, earth building and even modern day bushland regeneration. It fits well with the name "Nillumbik" which in the language of the Wurundjeri meant the not so good country covering most of our area and contrasted with the rich soil of the Kangaroo Grounds which they called Moor-rul.

The following weekend each society will arrange their own separate activities. We intend to have open days at our Local History Centre on both days and this will include a display in the adjoining former Eltham Court House. We are also planning a heritage walk at 2.00pm on each day. Other groups will be having open days, displays, walks, guided car tours and other activities. A full programme will be published by the Council.

Funding for the event will be from the Council's Heritage Grant allocation. An application for funding has also been made to the Department of Regional Development and it is expected that advice will be received shortly of the success of this application. These funds will enable the employment of a designer to work with the societies to design and construct display "booths" for the expo. These would become a permanent resource available to the societies. The funding will also provide publicity for the event.

Apart from the society displays it is proposed to have experts providing advice on genealogy and heritage items brought along by members of the public. The Andrew Ross Museum is organising a "treasure hunt" consisting of questions relating to items at the Expo. Invitations have already been sent to local schools and it is expected that a number of school groups will attend the Expo on the Friday.

Our display will mainly be drawn from our society collection. It is planned that it will mainly deal with the earth building aspect of the theme but drawing in other relevant aspects as well. It is hoped that members will be able to devote some time on each of the weekends to assist with the roster. We would like you to put the dates in your diary now to avoid clashes with those other items that are always making demands on our time.

Over the next two months the level of activity will increase and we may need to call on members for assistance with particular tasks. Please let Harry or Russell know if there are any aspects in which you are particularly interested or have a degree of expertise.

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Some six years ago I spoke at a gathering of the Currucan Family History Fellowship at Lilydale. The Currucan family are amongst Eltham's earliest residents from the late 1850's. Bridget, the daughter of Patrick and Bridget (nee Gorman), was the first of the family to leave the home village of Fanfore in County Clare in Ireland's troubled times. She arrived in Melbourne on Saturday 31st January 1854 on the sailing ship "Truro". Bridget married widower John Coleman in 1856 and settled in Eltham. Later she was joined by her two brothers Patrick and Peter and still later, following their father's death, by their mother. This left brother Michael on the family farm in County Clare.

From this family there has grown the Currucan Family History Fellowship which has family tree members worldwide based on the Currucans of Fanfore Ireland. Next Labor Day weekend March 6th and 7th will see our local population swell in numbers as this Fellowship comes to celebrate their sesquicentenary in Eltham. On Saturday March 6th at 12.00noon the principal event of the commemoration will be a 'Gathering' in the Eltham North Community Centre. On Sunday March 7th a more informal 'Family Day' program is planned. Our Society has offered to assist with a display at the Eltham Courthouse and Local History Centre of early Eltham items. Of foremost interest will be the Eltham Primary School records of 1864 to 1912.

Also being planned is a tour of Carrucan haunts – home sites – cemetery – primary school buildings.

Volunteers from our society will be sought to assist these visitors when their numbers of people are collated.

Some more anniversaries to celebrate in 2004:-

Eltham Living and Learning Centre purchase of land and development of the concept from 1974 – 30th anniversary.

Eltham Library opened in May 1994 with the transfer of books and materials from the former library in the Eltham Shire Office building – 10th anniversary.

The creation of the Shire of Nillumbik as part of the State Government municipal restructuring programme, December 1994 – 10th anniversary.

Harry Gilham, President.

RHSV RESOURCES

At the most recent meeting of the Nillumbik history groups Joan Hunt spoke on the resources of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria which are available for use by historical society members. Joan is the President of the State Committee of Historical Societies. The purpose of the talk was to make representatives (and through them the societies) more aware of the valuable resources available at the "Royal" for research or even for those wishing to dabble in history for personal interest. Membership of affiliated societies gives free access to these records but you do need to take our society membership card (ask Russell or Harry if you need it).

Of particular interest is the Pioneer Register which comprises four filing cabinets of records established over the years since 1926 of early family representatives settling in Victoria. Details of other types of records available can be found on the RHSV website (<http://www.historyvictoria.org.au>). The RHSV's History News is received by our society but is read by few members. Joan suggested that we encourage more members to read it.

This year is the 150th anniversary of railways in Victoria and the RHSV is associated with a touring exhibition to commemorate this event. Individual societies can apply to host the exhibition and we will consider whether we should be involved with this.

NEIL DOUGLAS

The artist and environmental campaigner Neil Douglas died late last year just as a significant exhibition of his work was coming to a close at Heide Museum of Modern Art. Neil was born in New Zealand but grew up in the Melbourne suburb of Bayswater. As a young man he was closely

New Zealand but grew up in the Melbourne suburb of Bayswater. As a young man he was closely associated with art patrons John and Sunday Reed and had a significant influence on the creation of their garden at Heide.

In the 1960's Neil lived at Research and then in the 70's he moved to the Bend of Islands area of Kangaroo Ground. Here he campaigned vigorously for the establishment of an Environmental Living Zone, a concept which was eventually adopted by the Government and Healesville Council.

In recent years Neil had been living in Western Victoria and painting in the Little Desert but he often returned on visits to Eltham. He died at Nhill at the age of 92.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

To satisfy the requirements of the Society's rules, notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Eltham District Historical Society Incorporated will be held at 8.00pm on Wednesday 10th March 2004.

The Agenda of the Annual General Meeting is set out below in accordance with the rules. Further details will be given in the March Newsletter.

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of 2003 Annual General Meeting
3. Reports
 - a. President's Report
 - b. Treasurer's Report
 - c. Any other reports
4. Statement by the Society in accordance with Section (3) of the Associations Incorporation Act 1981.
5. Election of office bearers and ordinary members of committee positions to be filled as follows:
 - President
 - Senior Vice President
 - Junior Vice President
 - Treasurer/Membership Secretary
 - Ordinary Committee Members (not less than three and not more than six).
6. Fixing of entrance fee (if any) and annual subscription
7. Any other business of which at least two weeks notice has been given to members.

It should be noted that under the Society's rules nominations of office bearers should be made in writing to the Secretary not less than seven days before the meeting.

Nominations should be signed by two members of the Society and accompanied by the written consent of the candidate. If insufficient nominations are received further nominations shall be received at the meeting. However, it should be noted that where a valid prior nomination is received it will have priority and no nomination for that position can be accepted at the meeting.

MORE NEWS

Additional shelving is being provided for our Local History Centre by Nillumbik Shire Council. This is part of the arrangement whereby we are to store memorabilia from the former Eltham Shire Council. The shelving has been ordered and delivery is expected in the next two weeks. The Council will then arrange delivery of the memorabilia items.

Russell Yeoman represented the Society at the celebrations to mark the 150th anniversary of the commencement of the Yan Yean reservoir. The ceremony included the launching of a book commissioned by Melbourne Water, "Yan Yean, A history of Melbourne's early water supply" by Tony Dingle and Helen Doyle. A copy has been purchased for our Society library.

The Summer 2003 edition of the Kangaroo Ground Chronicle has been issued by the Andrew Ross Museum and will be available at the February meeting. As well as interesting stories of Kangaroo Ground it carries the news that Bruce and Joy Ness, foundation members of our Society, have sold their home "View Hill" at Kangaroo Ground. Their health no longer enables them to manage the property and they have retired to Leith Park at St Helena.

Harry Gilham
President

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Russell Yeoman
Secretary

Phone - 9439 9717

Gwen Orford
Treasurer /
Membership Secretary
Phone 9439 8642



"Dirt Farming" at Eltham 1970 - Fabbro's Market Garden
Photograph George W Bell