

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our March meeting each year is the Annual General Meeting which includes the presentation of annual reports and the election of office bearers for the coming year. The official notification of the AGM and the agenda were published in the January Newsletter.

As always we are encouraging members to contribute to the operation of the Society by becoming an office bearer or committee member. Please give this some thought and if in doubt discuss it with one of our present office bearers. We warmly welcome fresh ideas and enthusiastic participation in the tasks involved in running our organisation.

Please note that in accordance with the rules of the Society, written nominations received prior to the AGM take precedence over those received at the meeting.

HAROLD BIRD OAM

Eltham has been Harold's home for eighty-one years. George Bird Snr. arrived from England in 1852 and lived with his uncle, George Stebbing. He worked for him as bricklayer's assistant in building, among others, the Anglican and Methodist Churches in Eltham. In 1862 he purchased land in Pitt Street and established a mixed farm and orchard. Harold's father, Arthur, worked on this orchard and finally when the estate was settled moved to establish an orchard and mixed farm in Pitt Street. This is now Harold's home.

His grandmother was Annie Lyon who moved in the late 1800's from Mildura and lived with her daughter Helen and sons David, John and Hector at the railway end of Susan Street. David and John owned and operated Eltham's motor car garage, service station and the hire car service in the early days.

As the guest speaker at the March meeting of the Society Harold will briefly review his family background in the early days of Eltham. This will include the enormous effect from his mother having him taught the piano from the age of seven years. This ability as a pianist and love of music that followed very greatly enhanced his career as a primary school teacher and finally school principal. For twenty-seven years as Administrative Director of the National Boys' Choir of Australia he combined school career and choir activities and developed exchanges of friendship and culture between the youth of Australia and of Japan, Taiwan, USA, Rome, Munich, Brussels, Paris and United Kingdom.

And finally, this is the Choir Qantas uses for their wonderful TV promotion of "I Still Call Australia Home".

NILLUMBIK HERITAGE WEEK 2004

This exciting event is only a month away and now is the time to indicate if and how you can assist with our Society's participation in the event. As advised in the January Newsletter the event will be held over two weekends, 26 to 28 March and 3 and 4 April. The first weekend will be a combined "Expo" in the Panton Hill Hall involving historical societies and similar organisations from the whole of the Shire of Nillumbik. The Friday has been included to allow school groups to visit the Expo. The theme of this expo is to be "Dirt Farming". On the second weekend each of the societies will be presenting their own local activities at various locations throughout the Shire.



The Busst House, Eltham
Built by Alistair Knox for artist Phil Busst in 1947

Funding for the event has been secured by way of a State Government grant through the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development and also a Heritage Grant by Nillumbik Shire Council. In addition significant Council officer time and other resources are being applied to this event. The funding grants have enabled the appointment of a designer to produce display facilities for each society at the Expo. There was an interesting array of talent evident in the applications for this position. The management committee has selected Raelene Marshall as the designer and was impressed by her innovative concepts outlined at the interview. Among her achievements is the touring exhibition "A Stone Upon a Stone". This outstanding showcase of dry stone walling has been previously commended in our Newsletter. Raelene is currently meeting with the participating societies to formulate ideas for displaying their exhibits.

As advised in our January Newsletter, the "dirt farming" theme is being interpreted in a number of ways. Pam Lawson of the Hurstbridge and District Historical Group is the originator of the theme. We had an interesting discussion on this theme at our February meeting. Pam's short talk focussed on the farmers at Hurstbridge who eked out a living on the dry hillsides by means of some very serious dirt farming. By way of example, she told the story of Fred Wick who in 1902 was a battling fruit grower on the land in Flat Rock Road now owned by Pam and Jack Lawson.

We plan to focus on earth building as the main part of contribution to the Expo. But we will be including some other more traditional farming aspects in our display. There will be particular reference to Holloway's 1851 "Little Eltham" subdivision. Most of this square mile was subdivided into lots of half to one acre but purchasers tended to buy several of these lots to establish a home and small farm or subsistence garden. Lots along the Diamond Creek were larger and we will make a feature of lot 90, 30 acres, ultimately purchased by the Shillinglaw family and on which they operated their small farm for many years.



Fulling, Eltham

Built over some years from 1945 by landscaper Gordon Ford. This was his home and garden until his death in 1999. Now owned by Gwen Ford and maintained in the style established by Gordon.

We also plan to feature some of the work of Walter Withers, the first important artist to make Eltham his home. Withers often painted farming scenes and copies of his sketches in our society collection feature many local farming subjects.

Our earth building exhibition will be largely based on the society's collection of large format photographs of mud brick houses, originally assembled by the late Alistair Knox. This interesting collection has rarely been on public display. Some of the photos from this collection are used to illustrate this Newsletter.

Richard Provan of Cottles Bridge is a manufacturer of mud bricks and has offered to help with our display. Richard is currently concerned that new planning controls will prevent the traditional local rural activity of mud brick making. State Government requirements for Five Star energy rating for new houses may also have serious negative consequences for mud brick building. Richard sees this Expo as an opportunity to raise awareness of these issues while making a contribution to the theme. Raelene Marshall is enthusiastic about the opportunities available with the use of mud brick features within the display.



Over the next few weeks leading up to Heritage Week there will be significant publicity produced by the Council which will go to all households in Nillumbik with some material being targeted at bringing visitors from a wider area. There will be a brochure giving details of the "Dirt Farming" Expo and all of the local events. It will include a map by Kangaroo Ground artist Syd Tunn showing all the venues with a little sketch of each one in typical Syd style. We thought it was worth including on the front page Syd's sketch of our Local History Centre and the Court House and another extract from the map here.

A copy of the publicity postcard produced by the Council is included with this Newsletter. Ask Russell if you would like more copies to send to friends or whoever.

On the second weekend we will have an open day on each of the Saturday and Sunday at our Local History Centre and the Court House. This will include extensive displays of material from our collection. We will be running heritage walks of about two hours at 2.00 pm on each day.

The upshot of all of this activity is that we need your help. Setting up the displays will require only a few people. But we need people to look after the exhibits over both weekends. A roster will be prepared and the more volunteers we have, the less time is needed from each person. Plan to devote some of the weekend to visiting the events being hosted by the other groups throughout the shire. Please contact Harry or Russell if you can help with our roster. A few people are required to stay overnight at the Pantom Hill Hall on each of the Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. Please advise as soon as possible if you can help with this also.

Many thanks to Sandra and Jessica from the Council who have and continue to put a great amount of time, effort and skill into the organisation of this project. To ensure the success of Nillumbik Heritage Week it now needs the participating organisations to match this effort. Your help is needed so that our Society's contribution is of the highest standard.



Another view of Fulling

WHAT ELSE?

Coming dates for workshops for our historical records are:-

Mondays 9.30am - 15 March and 19 April
Tuesdays 7.30pm 6 April and 4 May

We really do need more members to become involved in this work if we are to maintain our collection in an orderly fashion. Just come along to the Local History Centre at these times and there will be some useful task for you to do. The next scheduled committee meeting is at 7.30pm on Tuesday 13 April.

Harry Gilham advised in the January Newsletter of the reunion of the Carrucan Family in Eltham on 6 and 7 March. Family members will be visiting our Local History Centre on the Sunday from about 1.30 pm. Harry has asked that any available members come along to talk to the visitors.

Katrina Rank, Arts Officer for Nillumbik Council has advised that the Literary Reference Group that she co-ordinates has arranged for Tim Burstall to show and discuss his film "The Prize" and also some of his other films. "The Prize" was filmed in Eltham about 1960 and features local scenery and characters. This event will be at the Eltham Community and Reception Centre from 2 to 5 pm on Sunday 18 April.

Harry Gilham
President

Russell Yeoman
Secretary

Gwen Orford
Treasurer /
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