



ELTHAM DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Incorporated

No. A0016285F

728 MAIN ROAD (PO BOX 137) ELTHAM 3095

NEWSLETTER NO. 159 NOVEMBER 2004



**NEXT MEETING
8-00 PM WEDNESDAY
10th NOVEMBER**

**SLIDE PRESENTATION BY
RUSSELL YEOMAN
SIGNIFICANT TREES,
WILDFLOWERS AND LOCAL
GARDENS**

**ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZENS'
CENTRE
LIBRARY PLACE ELTHAM
(FORMERLY OLD SHIRE OFFICE
DRIVEWAY)**



**CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION
DINNER AND VIDEO
PRESENTATION
6.30 PM WEDNESDAY
8TH DECEMBER
ELTHAM LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE
728 MAIN ROAD, ELTHAM**

NOVEMBER MEETING

The starting point for assembling this slide show was the lists of significant trees compiled for the former Eltham Shire Council.

In the 1980's a list of significant trees, both natural and planted, was prepared by Council staff. In the early 1990's the Shire of Eltham Cultural Heritage Study identified many more trees, mostly planted rather than naturally occurring. Trees on these lists ranged over the whole of the Eltham Shire – from the Mountain Ash forests of Kinglake to the magnificent old River Red Gums at Lower Plenty. Trees are listed for size, age and rarity and also for the cultural significance such as historical association.

Many of these trees have now been photographed for our Society records and so the opportunity arises to view these slides at our meeting. However, on reviewing the slides it became apparent that a complete presentation based only on this collection may become somewhat repetitive. We have located a large collection of local wildflower slides taken by former council environment staff. We have also been able to borrow a collection of slides from Gwen Ford showing the landscape work of her late husband Gordon, including his own Eltham garden.

From all of these slides we have been able to assemble an interesting and varied presentation relating to our local natural and planted environment. Comments by Russell will be based on the former Council studies and also on notes prepared by Warrandyte tree buff John Anderson for a recent "Eltham Tree Walk".

CHRISTMAS FUNCTION

Our usual Christmas get-together will be held this year on Wednesday 8 December. The venue is nominally our Local History Centre but we will be making good use of the adjoining Court House.

Commencing time is 6.30pm for drinks including some of President Harry's famous homemade wines. – we hear that the letterbox plum is excellent this year.

Society funds will enable us to provide platters of meat and sweets. Members are asked to bring along a salad or something similar to share.

Following dinner we will show a video of Tim Burstall's award winning Eltham film "The Prize". This is the second half of the *Main Stream Melbourne* video - we saw the first half at our September meeting.

The Shire of Eltham memorabilia collection (referred to elsewhere in this Newsletter) will be available for those who wish to browse through this interesting collection.

This is an informal evening as our last function for the year. Members can sit around and chat, watch the video or browse through the memorabilia items or other sections of our collection. Family and friends are most welcome to join us on this occasion.

SHIRE OF ELTHAM MEMORABILIA

For some time now we have been saying that Nillumbik Council has been planning to make our Society the custodian for its collection of memorabilia from the former Eltham Shire Council. The

A solitary remnant of our bushland of the past
stands on private land off Parsons Road.
This Eucalypt is registered because of its
outstanding height.

Botanical Name: *Eucalyptus melliodora*.
Common Name: Yellow box.



Age: 130 years.
Height: 34.7 metres.
Girth: 4.1 metres.
Canopy: 20 metres.

transfer of this collection of paper-based material has now occurred. Generally memorabilia items classified as part of Council's art collection and negatives of historical photographs have been retained by the Council.

The items now stored at our Local History Centre are quite diverse. They include many photographs of Council activities, Councillors and Council staff. There are Council brochures, calendars and other publications. All of these items are catalogued and stored in quality archival boxes.

Also included is a large collection of old Council registers such as letter books, contract registers, cash books, etc. Many of these are large leather bound volumes, more of interest for their appearance than for their content.

Archivist Fraser Faithfull has worked with Chris Marks from the Council to produce a detailed "Finding Guide" for this collection. Early next year we hope to have Fraser talk to us at a Committee meeting or general meeting to explain the importance and use of the collection.

Items from this collection were used in a small display by our Society at the "On the Hill" festival at Panton Hill on 23 October.

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

As 'stakeholders' in the Shire of Nillumbik it is appropriate that when we celebrate our first ten years of change that we remind ourselves of the Government's actions in 1994.

Do you remember when the *Diamond Valley News* of Wednesday October 6th 1994 read:

SHIRE OF MONTSALVAT IS BORN

The article below this headline said that the Shire's new boundaries would encompass a population of 47,000. It was to be seen as a new environmentally focused Council. To increase its rating base the northern portions of the Shire of Diamond Valley were added whilst the (old) West Riding of the Shire of Eltham was to move to Banyule. Regarding finance, the interim report reads that the Montsalvat Shire would bring in savings of \$2.73 million each year. The State Government believed that a rates reduction of 18% was possible. In area the new boundary would encompass 388.4 sq.km. up from the Shire of Eltham's 274 sq.km. with its population of around 45,000.

The Local Government Board then indicated other alternatives and called for public opinion on its interim (Montsalvat) report.

We found that a merger across the Yarra River had been proposed to join with Doncaster-Templestowe Council in an idea which would have had both banks of the Yarra under just one Council from Warrandyte to Heidelberg.

Other ideas to increase the proposed Shire rate base were to include the Christmas Hills and Bend of Isles (population 11,000, area 40 sq. km.) also to have Eltham North with its \$2.5 million revenue brought inside the Shire along with a small part of the City of Whittlesea.

At a Diamond Creek meeting the group were 'overwhelming' in their opposition to the proposed name of the Shire, some declaring it 'commercial' and 'inappropriate'. Many favoured the parish name of the area – Nillumbik.

Again the Local Government Board met and the outcome of their decision to establish the Shire of Nillumbik was again headlined in the Diamond Valley News 21/12/1994:

NEW SHIRE, CITY GET UNDERWAY

The State Government appointed three Commissioners to do the task of Councillors (paid for by ratepayers) for one year. Unfortunately, this period was extended to two years when decisions made should have been left to elected Councillors.

In March 1997 the first councillors were democratically elected – each of the five Councillors represented wards with around 9,000 people. This Council was suspended in 1998 by the State Government. The second Council, with an Administrator's decision, was to still have five ward Councillors, together with four 'Shire Wide' Councillors with no specific tasks.

The third Council elections in March 2002 saw nine Councillors each with a Ward of around 4,200 people.

This coming November ratepayers are again to elect a nine person Council. This early date is a move by the State Government to have all seventy-nine State Local Councils voting to be held on the same date of each four years.

So – next elections will be in late 2008.

Watch this space!

Harry Gilham
Septuagenarian President.

500 WORD SNAPSHOT

Nillumbik Shire Council has advised that it is expanding its "Our Short Stories Project" under the title of the "500 Word Snapshot". The Council wants short stories, yarns and anecdotes which highlight people, places and events that have created or influenced the local character of our area. Suitable stories will be published on the Council's website.

The explanatory brochure contains the following project description:

This is an Oral History project paying tribute to the people, places and events that have shaped the Nillumbik area. The Shire has been home to colourful and respected identities, of artist colonies and environmentalists, such as Walter Withers (Heidelberg School artist), the Jorgensens and Skippers (Montsalvat), Clifton Pugh (Dunmoochin), Clem Christensen (Meanjin), Neil Douglas (artist and environmentalist) Gordon Ford (landscape designer), Alistair Knox (mud brick building), Alan Marshall (author), Tim Burstall (film maker), Graham Clark (inventor of the bionic ear), Joy Murphy (indigenous elder) and Peter Brock (sportsman). The area is rich in a history that encompasses indigenous people, gold mining, agriculture, wineries, the development of new approaches to mud brick building and natural landscape design.

The project has been clearly identified as an urgent need by a range of local identities and groups. Community members have expressed concern that, in many cases, the time for gathering first hand narratives is running out. They understand that if the life of the area is not preserved through this and other forms of narrative, then part of the area's unique history and identity will disappear.

500 Word Snapshot will take place between September 2004 – 2006. Local writers, students, historical society members and other individuals are encouraged to submit written "snapshots" that reflect a place and its people. We encourage writing that is evocative, meaningful yet simple.

Content guide.

500 Words Snapshot has a focus on simple yarns. They may be about:

- *a special interest,*
- *colourful or moving moments experienced in Nillumbik,*
- *a moment in time,*
- *urban myths,*
- *funny tales,*
- *stories that show quirkiness of a community or individuals,*
- *stories that people can relate to.*

The subjects don't need to be famous, but they may have done some important or extraordinary things that have impacted on their neighbourhood or wider community.

Members are strongly encouraged to take part in this interesting project. Further information is available from Russell Yeoman or from Council Arts Officer, Katrina Rank, phone 9433 3126.

NEWS IN BRIEF

The Andrew Ross Museum has unveiled a mural painted by local artist Don Brown and depicting the Kangaroo Ground landscape. An accompanying audio tape talks about the area as it would appear to Wurundjeri elder, Barak and pioneer school teacher, Andrew Ross.

The Eltham Festival will be held this year on 14 November. The Society now does not participate in the Festival, mainly because of the cost of Festival sites. Other events on this weekend but separate from the Festival will include the local Artists' Open Studios and the Panton Hill Mud Brick House Tour.

As part of its adoption of a structure plan for the Eltham "Activity Centre", Nillumbik Council has decided not to adopt the recommendation to offer the Eltham War Memorial site for sale. Many submissions including one from our Society suggested that this was the correct course of action. It is still proposed to sell the adjoining former Shire Office site.

The Society's Committee has decided to take up the offer of free associate membership of the Nillumbik Tourism Association. Previously the only category of membership required payment of a subscription and is more appropriate to commercial tourism operators.

The next records workshop at the Local History Centre will be at 9.30 am on Monday 15 November. The workshop scheduled for 7 December will be replaced by a Committee meeting but members other than Committee who would like to work on records could still come at 7.30 pm.

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