

ELTHAM DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Incorporated

No. A0016285F

728 MAIN ROAD (PO BOX 137) ELTHAM 3095

NEWSLETTER NO. 161 MARCH 2005

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
8-00 PM WEDNESDAY 9TH MARCH**

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

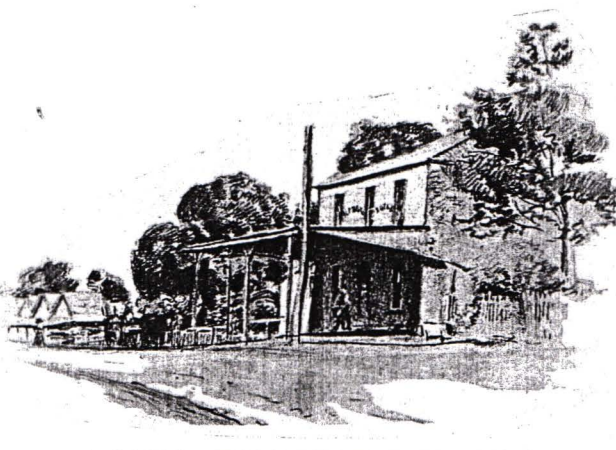
**GUEST SPEAKER PETER DOUGHERTY
"HISTORY IN A WORD"**

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**HISTORICAL WALKS
PROGRAM**

**SATURDAY 2 APRIL
SATURDAY 7 MAY**

**2 PM AT ELTHAM LOCAL
HISTORY CENTRE
BOOKINGS 9439 9717**



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.

PETER DOUGHERTY

Peter Dougherty has been involved in the local art scene for many years. As publisher and editor of the arts magazine *Artstreams*, his comments on the various branches of the arts are widely respected. His "The Arts" column in the Diamond Valley Leader presents a brief summary for a much wider cross section of the local community. Peter also operates his own gallery and the Artstreams Café at the St Andrews market.

Peter has a wealth of knowledge about present day and historical aspects of local art and artists and so the potential range of subjects for his talk is quite broad. Choosing a theme which is quite original, Peter will speak about historical writing which does not have history as its original intent. He will reference this theme to local art publications and, of course, his own magazine which is a significant part of this subject. There have been precursors, including *Angry Penguins* and other publications based on the Montsalvat community. A number of literary journals also have Eltham connections including *Meanjin* founded by Clem Christesen.

Peter's talk will provide an important contribution on an aspect of local history that we have not previously covered at a Society meeting. We expect that it will be most interesting and informative.

FEBRUARY MEETING AND THE FLOOD CONNECTION

Our February meeting was programmed as a discussion on current topics and it turned out that items for discussion needed to be curtailed to allow the meeting to finish at a reasonable time. Russell Yeoman provided an overview of the Shire of Eltham memorabilia collection that we now manage for Nillumbik Council. The large leather bound volumes of cashbooks, ledgers, letter books, etc. are a significant feature of this collection. Dennis Ward and Jim Connor both spoke to computer based slide presentations. Dennis had pictures from the diverse local heritage work he is involved with including his designs for a viewing platform at the Kangaroo Ground War Memorial. Jim took his cue from the Diamond Creek floods of 3 February. He showed photos of damage from these floods, the November 2004 floods and other views of the creek and its bridges. That prompted Harold Bird to speak of his experience of the 1934 Eltham flood which is the highest within living memory. Harold has been persuaded to put his flood memories in writing and so this very topical story is included here as a contribution to the recorded history of local events.

Arts in
Banyule, Darebin, Manningham,
Nillumbik, Whittlesea & Yarra

ARTSTREAMS

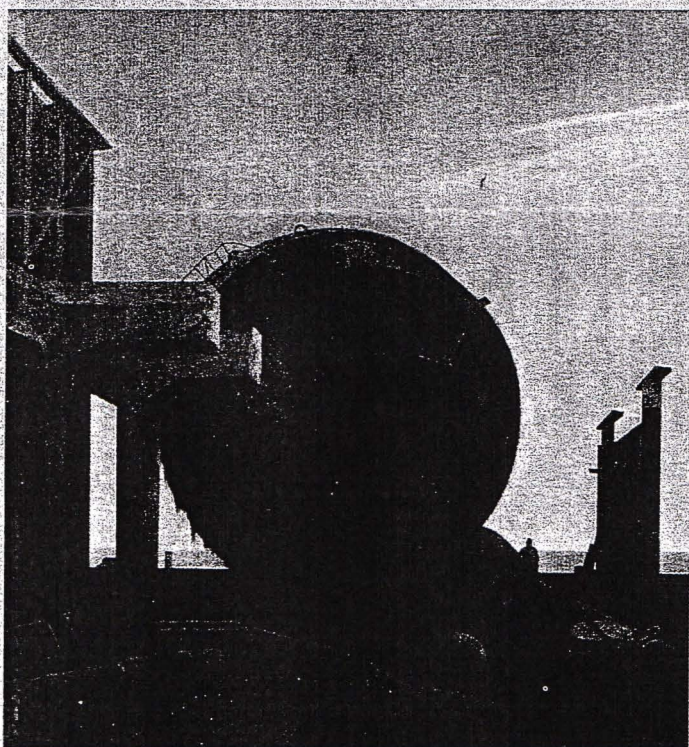
Vol. 5, No. 5, September/October, 2000

\$4.50*

inside this issue:

Saltwater

Paintings of Sea Country



What Makes Rick Amor Tick?

The Society has a collection of back issues of Artstreams. Many of the stories remain topical and they provide interesting reading.

THE 1934 FLOODS AT ELTHAM

There had been several days of very heavy rain and the level of the Diamond Creek began to rise. This was quite normal and we expected some flooding of the creek. It was very common for Kaylock's Bridge in Brougham Street to be covered with water and the local residents could detour and cross the Diamond Creek either at Bridge Street or the cement bridge at lower Eltham. But 1934 proved to be very different.

There was no Upper Yarra Dam or Silvan. The heavy rain caused volumes of water to race down the Yarra River and this resulted in flooding. With the Yarra in flood there was no outlet for the water from the Diamond Creek and severe flooding resulted.

So, here is an eyewitness account.

I was a student at the Eltham Higher Elementary School. As was often the case, as we crossed the Diamond Creek over the footbridge from the Main Road, the water level was rising, but we thought nothing of it. It was during the arithmetic lesson. I had finished my sums and was looking out of the classroom window while waiting. To my absolute amazement the flood waters from the creek were lapping the school fence near the front door. Normally you looked down the sloping paddock to the road and then across the flats towards the Main Road. There was a sea of swirling flood waters as far as the eye could see. The teacher alerted the Head master and we waited. In the meantime, Don Collis, another student was sent home with a letter to his father asking for help. His father owned the grocery/stockfeed store at the corner of Franklin Street and Main Road and was the Chairman of the School Committee.

Then the action started. School was dismissed. We were told that all bridges were flooded and we only had two alternatives to gain access to Main Road. One was to walk over the trestle railway bridge, which was still above the flood level, and the other was to proceed to the Cement Bridge and wade to the other side. We were told that the water was not very deep and that it would be quite safe. I was one of several students who decided to wade across. We entered the water in Falkiner Street just at the foot of the hill. We were able to wade slowly, and with water up to our knees we made it to the Main Road. Here we were confronted with a sea of swirling flood waters all the way to the other side of the bridge.

And now another factor enters this eye witness account.

Mr Monteith owned and operated a motor cab. It was a cab which was assembled on the chassis of a T Model Ford. Passengers entered by steps at the back and sat facing each other. Mr Monteith drove his cab slowly through the flood waters behind us. As he was overtaking us we noticed that he was ferrying the teachers across on their way to the railway station. As he approached the bridge, to our horror the cab floated and was washed across the road and towards the Lower Park. It was swirled away until to our great relief it settled against a tree stump and stopped. Mr Monteith escaped and began to wade to safety. We were open mouthed at what had happened. Mr Stainsby, one of the teachers, was a St Kilda footballer. He stepped out and one by one he carried the lady teachers safely to dry land on the other side.

He was the Sir Walter Raleigh hero of the school from then on.

We all made it to safety. When we went to view the floods the next morning only the top of the cab was visible. We discovered that the flood waters were lapping the walls of the houses in Falkiner Street and the Butterway family had to be rescued by police launch from the roof of their house. On the Antoinette Boulevarde side of the bridge the houses along the creek were flooded out, one of them being the home of Ian Grayling, a classmate of mine.

This leads me to the thought that this very serious flooding is not likely to occur again. This is because of the Upper Yarra Dam and the large pipeline through to the Silvan Reservoir.

Harold Bird.



The 1934 Diamond Creek flood at the corner of Falkiner Street and Main Road. The bridge referred to in Harold Bird's story is in the right background. The dark shape in the water just to the left of the telegraph pole is the roof of Monteith's bus.

NILLUMBIK COMBINED HISTORY GROUPS

Following the successful Nillumbik Heritage Festival in 2004 it has been decided that events in 2005 will be of a lower key nature and, in particular, will be spread over a longer period to enable members of the various societies to visit activities organized by other societies. Two planning meetings of the combined groups have been held so far this year and a third is planned for 10 March. Russell and Harry usually attend these meetings on our behalf but if anyone else would like to be involved they would be most welcome.

It is proposed to provide publicity for appropriate events that societies organize or plan to participate in. Hopefully, this can be done through Nillumbik Council and that is still under investigation. Coming up in March are Nillumbik's Autumn Fair at Ellis Cottage on 19th and the Platypus Festival at Hurstbridge on 6th. Warrandyte Historical Society will be

participating in the Warrandyte Festival on 19th and 20th. Details are still to be finalized for possible events at the Andrew Ross Museum in March and April. These include the book launch of the Andrew Ross Diaries and a tour of the Kangaroo Ground Cemetery. Watch for publicity on all of these events of local historical interest.

As its contribution, our Society will be organizing once-a-month local history walks around Eltham. These will be held on the first Saturday of each month commencing on 2 April. They will start at 2pm at the Local History Centre and over the course of the rest of the year will follow a selection of routes of historic interest. It is planned to advertise these walks for public participation but, of course, our members are encouraged to participate also. They will probably take the place of the excursions listed in our 2005 Program. Russell and/or Harry will lead the walks but if anyone else would like to be involved then let us know. Bookings will be required. Ring Russell on 9439 9717.

The combined group is examining the possibility of becoming an incorporated association to enable it to apply for grants etc. Grants may be available for events in 2006 associated with the Melbourne Commonwealth Games. Such events could include research or exhibitions based on significant local sporting events or personalities. Any member with an interest in sporting history may wish to be involved in a project associated with the Games.

Dennis Ward is the heritage representative on Nillumbik Council's Cultural Advisory Committee. New nominations for this committee are to be called for in the near future and the combined group agreed that it should nominate Dennis for a further term on this committee.

WHAT ELSE?

The RHSV's program up until April includes a number of excursions, lectures and seminars which may be of interest to our members. There is a seminar on the RHSV manuscript collection on Tuesday 29 March at 11am. On Thursday 9 April there is an excursion to Flinders and surrounds. Our RHSV affiliation enables our members to participate in these events at RHSV members' rates.

A book launch was held on 24 February at Edendale Community Farm for "The Complete Field Guide to Butterflies of Australia" by Michael Braby. Dr. Braby lived in Eltham as a young person and is credited with discovery of a number of colonies of the rare Eltham Copper Butterfly.

The interest of members in lively discussion at our February meeting shows that there is a significant role for informal involvement with society records and low key activities. We hope to build on this interest with improved member involvement in our records workshops which are held at the Local History Centre twice each month. Coming dates are as follows:-

Mondays 9.30am	21 March, 18 April
Tuesdays 7.30pm	5 April, 3 May.

Harry Gilham
President

Russell Yeoman
Secretary

Gwen Orford
Treasurer /
Membership Secretary
Phone 9439 8642

Phone - 9439 1175

Phone - 9439 9717