

ELTHAM DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Incorporated

No. A0016285F

728 MAIN ROAD (PO BOX 137) ELTHAM 3095

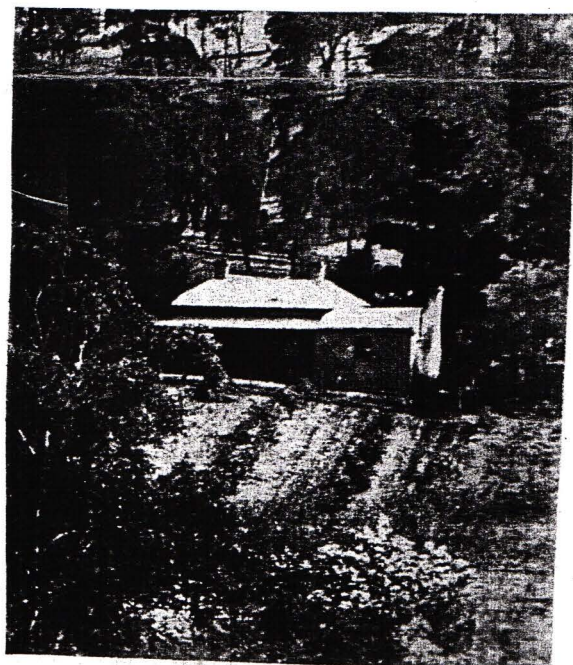
NEWSLETTER NO. 162 MAY 2005

**NEXT MEETING
8-00 PM WEDNESDAY 11TH MAY**

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

**SPEAKER MICHAEL AITKEN
"POSTCARDS FROM ELTHAM"**

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HISTORICAL WALKS PROGRAM

**SATURDAY 7 MAY
SATURDAY 4 JUNE**

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

Rear view of the house at 66 Susan Street, Eltham.
(See article on page 4)
From The Rose Series postcard No P4324
View at Eltham, Vic.

MAY MEETING

Today postcards are a popular form of communication from holiday destinations. In earlier years before the development of modern communications, postcards showing local scenes were often the medium of everyday communication with distant friends and family. And so we find that there is a huge range of early scenes of many different areas depicted on postcards. Eltham is no exception. Many of the photos in our collection have been copied from postcards.

Michael Aitken's hobby is collecting postcards and as a long term Eltham resident he has included as many Eltham postcards as possible in his collection. Michael will talk to us about his hobby and will show a selection from his collection, mainly views of Eltham. There are obvious difficulties with displaying the actual postcards. So with assistance from Jim Connor, Michael has arranged a computer slide show to illustrate his talk.

Michael is very happy to answer questions about his hobby. If anyone would like to bring along postcards from their own collection, they can talk about them or Michael could provide his own expert assessment.

STANHOPE

The historic Eltham property Stanhope is currently for sale after having remained in the ownership of literary and academic figures Clem and Nina Christesen for over fifty years. Clem died in 2003 and Nina died two years earlier. In their later years the Christesens sold some of the surrounding land for new housing blocks. The current land holding of a little less than a hectare includes several titles and the intention is to sell these separately. However, the house and the main components of the garden would remain on a quite large parcel of land. The house and garden have been included in the Eltham Heritage Study and are protected by a heritage overlay in the Nillumbik Planning Scheme.

The Heritage Study records that the house was designed by the noted architect Harold Desbrowe Annear and built in 1910.

It has been extended several times. Some years ago Clem Christesen wrote a brief history of "Stanhope" and this is an appropriate occasion to repeat that article.

STANHOPE HOUSE is situated on the crest of Stanhope Hill about ten minutes' walk westward from the Eltham railway station and is bounded by Peter, Fay and Stanhope Streets. The original property, comprising 15 ½ acres with a frontage on Diamond Creek, was bought in about 1900 by Will Longstaff (b. 1878, d. London 1953), official war artist during World War I, who became famous for his painting 'The Ghosts of Menin Gate', France which is now in the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. The main residence, designed by Desbrowe Annear, was built of jarrah, with stucco walls and floors of Tasmanian hardwood. The rooms were panelled with Californian redwood (sequoia). Away from house was a cottage (used as a studio), and stables, dairy and meathouse. In 1919 Mr Theo. Handfield bought the property from Mrs Longstaff. On New Year's Day 1924 most of the estate (eighty blocks) was auctioned. Bishop Reginald Stephen, Warden of Trinity College and distinguished scholar, bought the house and five acres in 1928. Dr and Mrs C.B. Christesen became the new owners in 1946 and subsequently extended the house on the north and south sides.

'Stanhope' has had many very interesting art and literary associations. When Will Longstaff occupied it - he was a cousin of another well-known painter, Sir John Longstaff - various leading artists of the period, including Walter Withers who lived nearby, were frequent visitors. A son of Mr and Mrs Handfield, John, became a journalist and author, and now lives with his wife Esta at Homestead Road, Eltham. Bishop Stephen was related to Sir Leslie Stephen (1832-1904), one of the great representative minds of Victorian Britain, first editor of the monumental *Dictionary of National Biography* and father of the famous novelist and essayist Virginia Woolf. John Harcourt, novelist and music critic, rented 'Stanhope' while he and his wife Fay were building 'Clay Nuneham' (mudbrick) at the foot of Stanhope Hill near the creek. Nina Christesen, academic and founding editor of *Melbourne Slavonic Studies*, was Head of the Department of Russian Language and Literature, University of Melbourne, from 1946 to 1977. Clem Christesen, poet, short story writer and painter, founded Australia's leading literary journal *Meanjin Quarterly* in 1940 and remained editor until 1975. Very many distinguished Australian and foreign writers, artists and academics - from Nobel prize-winning novelist Patrick White to the world's leading cellist Mstislav Rostropovich - have visited 'Stanhope' over the years. The extensive garden is said to be one of the loveliest in Eltham. The main entrance is by way of Diamond and Peter Streets.

GWENDOLINE MARGARET BAKER NEE BOWES 1928 - 2005

Gwen Baker as we knew her, often used her full name in her writings and even acknowledged her maiden family name as a means of reinforcing her own personal identity.

Gwen died on 28 February 2005 and has been buried at Arthurs Creek Cemetery in accordance with her wishes. It is typical of her humour that after visiting the site she wrote:

"I have seen the Cemetery, so if I wake in sleep
it has a nice view"

Gwen was a foundation member of our Society. We remember her mainly for her contribution to our meetings, her witty comments or questions to our speakers and, of course, her collection of plants that she contributed to help the finances of our Society. Her friends in the Society also remember her cards and brief letters on a wide range of subjects.

Gwen's wide range of interests included pottery, poetry and of course her gardening. She was an active member of many organizations including the Red Cross, Catholic Church, Nillumbik Garden Club and the former Eltham Arts Council. Her small self-published booklet of poems and writings starts with this item written at 2am on Easter Sunday 1975.

THOUGHT

*The seeming steady stillness
of this quiet night
has varied sound to one
who sits and thinks of life.*

*Of times of your
of pleasant things
and if the future has in store
a place to be - a reason to exist.*

*One hears a bird upon the roof
scratching at his mate
while in the distance a car goes by
returning home quite late.*

*A neighbours dog goes forth and bark!
then stillness once again,
like sunshine after rain.
and so the thinker having
heard and thought,
carefully turns out the light
and goes to bed.*

66 SUSAN STREET

Nillumbik Council has applied for a planning permit to demolish the old farm house which sits in a corner of Alistair Knox Park adjacent to the Bridge Street/Susan Street roundabout. This building is identified as being of local heritage significance in the Eltham Heritage study. The later Nillumbik Heritage Study recognizes it as having some historical interest but downgraded from its status in the Eltham study. It is covered by the heritage overlay for Alistair Knox Park in the Nillumbik Planning Scheme and so requires a planning permit for demolition. However, it is not recognized in the Planning Scheme in its own right. The Society is objecting to the demolition of this building.

The Eltham Heritage Study research indicates that the house was built for William and Ann Crozier in 1878.

The Eltham Heritage Study sets out the following history of this house (deleting the rate book and conveyancing references):

Crozier's property was originally bounded by York (which crossed the main road and ran through to Susan Street and beyond), Bridge Street West and the Diamond Creek. In the 1877 Eltham rate records, William Crozier, farmer, was shown as the owner of two allotments of vacant land in Eltham with NAVs of 10 pounds and 18 pounds.

This land was within Josiah Holloway's subdivision of Portion 12 of Section 4 in the Parish of Nillumbik and was bounded by York, Susan, Bridge Street West and the Diamond Creek and comprised over two acres. The following year, a house and land valued at 38 pounds was listed on Crozier's property. This building was later identified as on the present site of 66 Susan Street. By 1888, when Crozier was still the owner/occupier, the NAV of his Eltham house had risen to 47 pounds. However, during the depressed 1890s, it fell to 35 pounds.

By the turn of the century it was described as a house and six acres of land. At this time it was transferred to Henry Hill, member of a well-known Eltham family of bakers, farmers and carriers, by Mrs. Mary Ann Crozier. By this date, the property was bounded by Susan, Brisbane and Bridge Street West and the Diamond Creek. (York Street no longer crossed the main road).

Some 55 years later, Ivy Edna Hill of Bridge Street, widow, and executrix of the will of Arthur Ernest Hill, retired dairy farmer, transferred the property to the Shire of Eltham for the sum of 2,500 pounds.

The Nillumbik study adds to this information:

This house is pictured in many early views of Eltham, when it was in a farm and forest context. The 1945 aerial view shows the house on the north-east corner of Bridge and Susan Street in open paddocks, with house yard plantings, but with an indication of an orchard or plantation on the east side.

The house is described as follows:

This weatherboard house, with its corrugated iron clad hipped roofs, has been altered such that only its roof and plan form are indicative of early farm houses. The openings and their joinery have been changed, as have the verandah and interior. The simple corbelled brick chimney is typical of both Edwardian-era and Victorian-era houses.

The gabled red brick outbuilding appears to be from the inter-war period, being a wash house or store.

Condition: *Externally fair (disturbed, reasonably preserved).*

Integrity: *Externally substantially changed/major intrusions.*

The later study's Statement of Significance is as follows:

This altered weatherboard house is of historical interest to Eltham:

- *as indicative of an early farm house in this part of Eltham where all traces of the previous farm land use have all but disappeared (Criterion A4, B2);*
- *for its public use from 1964 as the Eltham Shire's Family Day Care Centre (Criterion A4, G1).*

It is noted that although the Council purchased the property in 1964 the Family Day Care Use did not in fact occur until the 1970s.

The Society considers that the house should not be demolished but rather should be preserved and restored to reflect its status in Eltham's history.

COMBINED NILLUMBIK HISTORY GROUPS

Meetings of representatives from all local history groups are continuing on a monthly basis. There has been some discussion as to whether the combined organisation should become an incorporated association but this issue has not yet been resolved. Our Society remains to be convinced of the benefits of this suggestion.

Katrina Rank, Arts Officer from Nillumbik Council, is producing a Calender of Events for the combined societies. This brochure will be widely distributed and is expected to be available in the next few weeks.

The combined group is considering running a ten week course at the Nillumbik Living and Learning Centre in the fourth term of this year. It would include a presentation by each of the local societies.

A possible project for 2006 is involvement in the Commonwealth Games program. Ways in which we can contribute will be considered at the May meeting of the group.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2005 Annual General Meeting was held on 10 March and resulted in all office bearers and committee members being re-elected for a further year. The respective positions are as follows:-

President	-	Harry Gilham
Senior Vice President	-	Doug Orford
Junior Vice President	-	Jim Connor
Treasurer/Membership Secretary	-	Gwen Orford
Secretary	-	Russell Yeoman
Committee Members	-	Diana Bassett-Smith, Sue Law, Jan McCauley, Jo McCormick, Jock Read, Mary Regan.

Because of rising expenses, particularly insurance, subscriptions for this year will be increased. They are now as follows:

Newsletter	\$10.00
Adults	\$20.00
Students	\$ 2.00
Family	\$25.00
Business Organisations	\$25.00

Subscriptions are due on 1st July for 2005-6 but Gwen will be happy to accept advance payment at the May meeting.

Following the formal business of the meeting art commentator Peter Dougherty spoke about writers in the literary and arts fields and how their articles become historical records. Peter presented the Society with a complete set of his magazine *Art Streams*.

WHAT ELSE?

The first in our series of public heritage walks was considered a success with 10 people participating. This was despite limited publicity. The event was listed in the Whats On segment of the Diamond Valley Leader and that accounted for most of the participants. The next two walks are on 7 May and 4 June at 2pm. Members and the public are most welcome. They will follow different routes to the first walk. Book with Russell on 94399717.

Harry Gilham plans to produce a new edition of the Chronology of Local Events. We are applying to Nillumbik Council for a grant to cover the production costs. If anyone knows of historical events not already included please pass yhr information on to Harry.

Harry Gilham
President

Phone - 9439 1175

Russell Yeoman
Secretary

Phone - 9439 9717

Gwen Orford
Treasurer /
Membership Secretary
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