

ELTHAM DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Incorporated

No. A0016285F

728 MAIN ROAD (PO BOX 137) ELTHAM 3095

NEWSLETTER

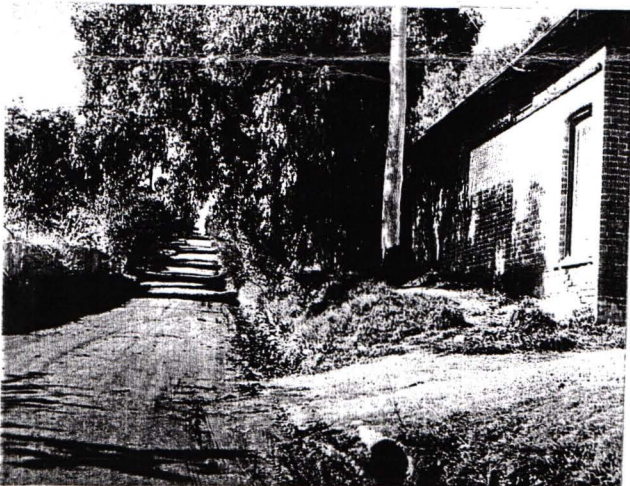
NO. 164 SEPTEMBER 2005

NEXT MEETING

8-00 PM WEDNESDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER

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

**"SHAPING OF THE AUSTRALIAN CULTURAL LANDSCAPE"
A TALK ABOUT THE ROLE OF DRY STONE WALLS IN AUSTRALIAN HISTORY
GUEST SPEAKER RAELENE MARSHALL**



York Street in the 1970s before demolition of the old bakery near the corner of Main Road. York Street is one of the "little streets" of Holloways 1851 Little Eltham subdivision that are a feature of our historical walks.

Photo by Hugh Fisher

HISTORICAL WALKS PROGRAM

**SATURDAY 1 OCTOBER
SATURDAY 5 NOVEMBER**

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

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Raelene Marshall is known to some of our members as the designer of the 2004 Nillumbik heritage expo "Dirt Farming". People with an interest in dry stone walls would know her as the curator of the touring exhibition "A Stone Upon a Stone" and as a founding member of the Dry Stone Wall Association of Australia. Raelene's research for her exhibition (with assistance from Dr Carlotta Kellaway also known to many members) led to her presentation of a paper at the Eighth International Dry Stone Walling Conference in Switzerland in 2002. That paper is the basis of her talk to our Society which will include a "Powerpoint" display of photographs from the exhibition.

The talk is entitled "Shaping of the Australian Cultural Landscape" and it will deal with the importance of dry stone walls in this context. We generally think of dry stone walls as belonging to the basalt plains of Western Victoria and that certainly forms a significant part of Raelene's subject. However, there is a wide range of other applications including the use of such walls in garden construction by landscapers such as Edna Walling and Eltham's Gordon Ford.

Raelene will also talk about the work of the Dry Stone Walls Association including a proposal to visit Eltham next year.

This meeting has a change of topic from that printed in our program. We have taken the opportunity to hear about a subject of national and international significance which is also quite relevant in the local context. We think this will be a most enjoyable meeting and so we encourage members to bring along any friends who may be interested.

ELTHAM JUSTICE PRECINCT

In recent months there has been much activity focussing on our Local History Centre in the former police residence and the adjoining Eltham Court House. Two separate but related initiatives have been going through their report writing, planning and funding stages and over the next few months we will see significant changes to the appearance of the two sites.

As part of State government job creation program, funding has been allocated for landscaping works on the two adjoining sites. Further funding has been committed by Nillumbik Shire Council and the project will be carried out by the Council in conjunction with the Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE. A landscape design is being prepared that is intended to complement the historic importance of the buildings. An unfortunate casualty of the work is the front garden of the Local History Centre developed by Marion Yeoman over the years of our occupancy of this site. The rear garden, commenced by the Parks and Environment Section of the Eltham Shire Council and restored by Marion is to remain. It includes the tree planted by the Society in memory of Blanche Shallard. The Grevillia in the front garden planted in 1998 by Margaret Taylor and Clifford Crate from Eltham, England is to be transplanted to another location on the site. Cuttings are to be taken from the plant to cover the possibility of failure of the relocation.

One objective of the plan is to open up the site to better public access and use. The Society has some concerns about security of the premises and this is subject to on-going discussions.

Preparatory site works have been carried out by the Council and work by NMIT students will start in a few weeks.

The proposed works on the two sites have prompted the preparation of a Conservation Management Plan by the Land Stewardship and Biodiversity-Historic Places section of the Department of Sustainability and Environment. The plan is currently in draft form and is intended to provide guidelines for use of and changes to these two sites that are listed on the Victorian Heritage Register. The report refers to the combined sites as the Justice Precinct, Eltham.

When completed the report will present a comprehensive assessment of the precinct including its heritage significance and a brief history. It will establish detailed guidelines for the conservation and use of both sites. Illustrations include a detailed photographic survey of the site as it currently exists.

From the sections already completed we have selected the one headed Comparative Assessment to reproduce here. It provides a most interesting comparison of the precinct and its individual buildings with others in Victoria.

The Precinct

The Eltham Court House and Police Station were built in response to a perceived need for law and order at Eltham, when gold was discovered nearby. The court house and police quarters were established on adjacent allotments in a location first subdivided for sale in Eltham. This area did not subsequently develop as Eltham's civic and commercial centre, as expected, and the Eltham township developed north of the court house and police station. Consequently these early Government buildings do not provide a focus for Eltham, as Government buildings often do in other townships.

The Government's 'justice precinct' at Eltham originally comprised a small brick court house, brick residence, bluestone lock up, timber police office, and brick stables. The use of brick and stone building material reflected the Government's increasing investment in more permanent structures, replacing the use of portable structures earlier in 1850s.

The scale and buildings of the Eltham Police site also reflects the move by the early 1860s, away from the colony's initial para-military style of policing to establishing local 'police stations' for law enforcement in the community. Police accommodation was developing on a more domestic scale, as fewer barracks were built and more separate police quarters/residences were constructed. Initially the Police quarters at Eltham served as both residence and office but it is likely that the timber office was provided to separate accommodation from official duties. Stables were required for the police horses and the lock up was a temporary holding place for prisoners attending the court and overnight miscreants.

Over time, various buildings in the precinct have been demolished or made redundant, reflecting changes in Government services and relocation of activities. Exant original buildings include the court house (1860), police residence (1859), and the stable (1859). The bluestone lock up and timber office have been demolished. A replica police office has been constructed and a portable lock up has recently been located on site.

The Court house, and Police Residence have a Main Road frontage, and are located close to the front of the allotments. The courthouse is physically separated from the early police complex by a paling fence.

More than 600 police stations have been established in Victoria since the 1850s. Many of these have been temporary 'stations', existing only as long as the nearest goldfield or agricultural settlement endured. Of those police stations that have become permanent, at least 50 have retained more than one building and can be regarded as a 'complex' of police buildings. About 30 police stations (or former police stations) have retained three or more original buildings. Nineteen of these complexes are associated with a court house and form a recognisable justice precinct.

Notable Justice precincts in Victoria include, Avoca, Beechworth, Carisbrook, Carlton, Chiltern, Creswick, Daylesford, Flemington, Gisborne, Omeo, Port Melbourne, Skipton, Smythesdale, Stawell West, Talbot, Trentham and Warrnambool.

Of these, Eltham is one of the very few defined precincts located in Melbourne's metropolitan area. The others are Carlton, Flemington, and Port Melbourne. These Stations reflect the urban environment with an emphasis on larger barrack style accommodation, and generally established at a later date (1870s –1890s), replacing earlier police stations.

Carlton has a large barracks building, bluestone cell block, portable lock up and small court house. Port Melbourne, also has a barracks, a bluestone cell and had a small timber office. It is also associated with a court house. Flemington was built in the 1890s and is a large complex designed to meet urban needs.

Of the metropolitan justice precincts, Eltham probably best demonstrates the development of early policing in a small community. It is an early precinct (1859/60) that has retained most of the elements that demonstrate early policing including: simple quarters, a stable, a lock up (though not originally on site) and proximity to a small court house.

Eltham also has an association with early gold mining and can be compared with several early precincts in rural communities, including Avoca, Chiltern, Creswick, Daylesford and Smythesdale.

Eltham Court House

More than 350 court houses have been built by the Public Works Department since 1856, when the Department was established. Bruce Trethowan, in his architectural study of the Public Works Department (1975), notes numerous building types and styles for court houses across Victoria. However, all of the court houses have shared a generic similarity in composition and expression, with the court room providing the central focus for the plan and visual composition. A Study of Court Houses in Victoria (O'Neill, 1998) also notes a tendency to conform to traditional forms and massing, inherited from Britain. Because court functions have remained largely unchanged over the years, the arrangement of the central room and subsidiary rooms at the rear or the side has usually been maintained. In addition, the repetition of massing and motifs has been used to express the authority of the government and make court houses easily recognisable.

Most of the impetus for early court house construction arose from the need to provide law and order on the goldfields. By 1860, more than fifty court houses had been built in

goldfields towns. These early court houses ranged from the simple timber buildings (usually portable) of the early government/police camps, to more substantial brick and stone structures, housing the higher courts and Courts of Petty Sessions.

Trethowan has identified Eltham Court House as one of a group of early court houses with a projecting entry and of simple design. In this grouping which includes Avoca (1859), Mornington (1860) and Alexandra (undated), a gabled entry porch leads to a gabled court room, behind which is an office, or offices.

A Comparative study of Court Houses (1991) places Eltham in an early group of 'Victorian Free Classical' structures, featuring a projecting entry porch and gabled roof. Characteristically, this group shares a simple, rectangular shape, central placement of the court room with smaller-scale offices set back at the sides or rear of the court room, arched openings, and decorative string courses.

All building examples of this Court house type were constructed in brick, except Port Fairy, which is of bluestone.

Examples of this type are: Creswick (1859), Hamilton (1858), Omeo (c 1860), Port Fairy, formerly Belfast (1859), Mornington, formerly Schnapper Point (1860), Port Melbourne (1860), Stawell, Pleasant Creek (1859), Talbot (1860), Chiltern (1865), Taradale (1864), Yackandandah (1864), and Alexandra (1877).

Remarkably, all twelve of these court houses are extant and nine are reasonably intact. Three court houses have been modified. Alexandra Court House has been expanded with the addition of flanking government offices and a post office (1878), although the original court house structure is intact. At Hamilton, alterations and additions were carried out in 1865 and 1882, to accommodate the County and Supreme Courts, replacing the simple entry with a recessed, arcaded entry. Port Fairy Court house was altered with a grouping of three arched openings at the front façade, in 1864 and 1873, again to accommodate a Supreme Court.

Eltham Police Residence

A Comparative study of Police Buildings in Victoria: building types (1997) places Eltham Police Residence in a large group categorised as 'Domestic Style, Victorian structures, featuring a Verandah and projecting bay'. Eltham Police Residence (1859) is amongst the earliest examples of this type. This type began to replace the typical double fronted residences from the 1860s, but most examples were built in the 1880s.

Nearly 70 examples of this residence type have been identified, constructed from 1859 to the 1890s.

Of the 60+ known examples constructed, 24 residences survive. The Eltham residence is reasonably intact.

Eltham Police Stables

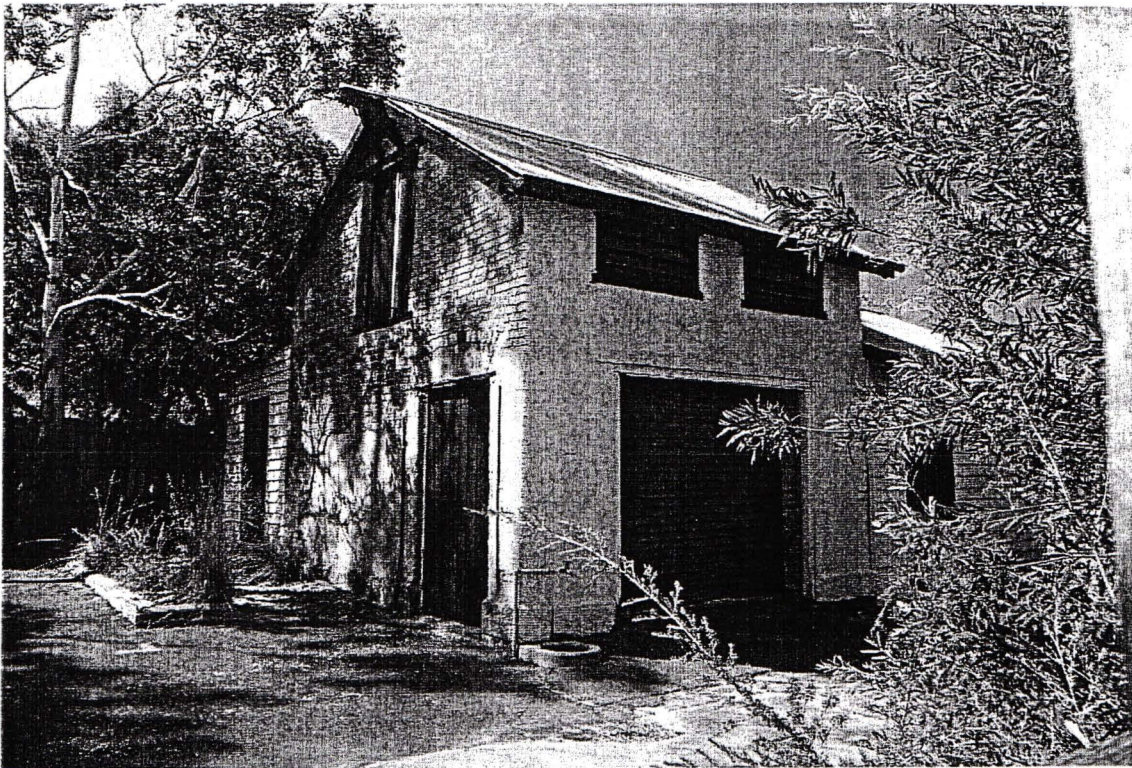
From the 1860s, stables were constructed with more durable building materials: stone and brick. Seven stables are known to have been constructed in stone, while at least 22 stables were constructed in brick. Eltham is amongst a group of early stables constructed in brick. From the 1880s, stables were largely constructed in timber. Of the 22 brick stables built, 13 are extant.

The stable at Eltham has been substantially altered.

Eltham Portable Lock up

The Portable lock up at Eltham is not original to the site and has been recently relocated. The date of construction is unknown. It is amongst a large group of portable locks up, categorised as 'Portable Lock Up – Timber – Later' and also known as the "Casterton style", based on the only known plan for portable lock ups, built for the Casterton Police Station, in 1907. The Later portables have been in use since the 1880s.

It is not known how many lock ups of this type have been constructed in Victoria. At least 50 examples have been documented around the state. Of these, 42 are known to be extant.



The police stales. Photo from the Eltham Justice Centre Precinct Conservation Plan

NOTICE OF SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given in accordance with the rules of the Society of a Special General Meeting to be held as part of our regular meeting on Wednesday 9 November, 2005 at the Eltham Senior Citizens' Centre.

This will be a short formal meeting at the beginning of the regular meeting: The purpose of the meeting will be to consider the matter of incorporation of the combined historical societies and heritage groups in the Shire of Nillumbik.

The Society's committee has endorsed a recommendation from the combined group that the following motions be put to the meeting:

1. That this society/group agrees that an entity be incorporated to facilitate joint cooperation and activities between the nine historical societies and heritage groups in Nillumbik in terms of the proposal submitted for consideration.
2. That this society/group agrees to become a member of that entity and agrees to abide by the rules established by that organization.
3. That two delegates be formally appointed to represent the interests of this society/group in the incorporated entity.

NEWS FROM THE ANDREW ROSS MUSEUM

We are all excited at the imaginative display in Room One. The team led by Don Brown have excelled themselves.

Please come and see this exciting display of local history. Perhaps a bus trip to the museum, a cuppa then a visit to the War Memorial Tower to sit on the new seats and drink in the view. The eastern boundary skyline is presently dominated by a tall crane as Melbourne Water is constructing a huge steel water tank to supplement growing demand. Both the Historical Society and Museum have had input to the project so as to preserve our precious view.

Another project which the Museum has commenced is interviewing and recording short interviews with people who have a "Tale to Tell". Already we have over fifty potential story tellers. This has the possibility to be another exciting project and I feel one of discovery. If you know of anyone or would like to tell their story we do want to hear it.

On 28 August the Museum launched its latest book, "Golden Days on the Caledonian Diggings". Mick Woiwod is the author. Mick has taken the Diaries of Thomas Young and developed a very readable book with his interpretation and notes. The book of A4 size printed by Para Printing, of sixty-nine pages, and with Don Brown's support is liberally illustrated with maps, photos and diagrams. The print too is clear and easily discernable. For lovers of history and those familiar with the district it offers a pleasant few hours of reading, even tempting one to jump in the car and follow the route map found in the centre pages to satisfy your curiosity.

The book is available from the museum and the Historical Society for \$15.00. Copies will be available at the September meeting.

Diana Bassett-Smith

SOCIETY NOTES

The regular donations to the Society of a variety of material by the Bassett-Smiths is always most welcome. The latest donations were made by Diana at the August committee meeting. They included a carpenter's plane owned by her ancestor and Kangaroo Ground pioneer Joseph Stephenson. The other item was a collection of photos by Peter of Research 1988 and some early local festivals.

Members are reminded of our regular heritage walks around Eltham on the first Saturday of each month. They start at 2pm at the Local History Centre. They are open to public participation and there is no charge. Let your friends know about them

as well. There is also our regular program of records workshops and we really would like some more assistance with this. Coming dates are:

Mondays 9.30 am 19 September 17 October
Tuesday 7.30 pm 4 October

The Society applied under the State Government's Local History Grants Program for a grant to assist Marguerite Marshall with an extended edition of her book "Nillumbik Now and Then". Under the recently announce third round of grants for this year \$3000 has been allocated to this project.

In its 2005/6 budget Nillumbik Council has again allocated funds for Heritage Support Grants to be divided between the historical societies and similar groups within the shire. Our share of the grant is \$450 and we are grateful to the Council for this support.

A Cultural Development Grant for the 2004/5 year was received from the Council for Dennis Ward's "Little Eltham Trail" project. Those funds have now been used in scanning a large number of photos of Eltham from the Society and Eltham Library collections. The Society now has a significant collection of digital images of photos maps and other documents available for its own use as well as for Dennis's project.

If you have not paid your 2005/6 subscription remember that they were due on 1 July. Gwen Orford would be happy to receive any outstanding subs at the September meeting.

OTHER LOCAL NEWS

The new owner of Wingrove Cottage has been carrying out repairs to prevent further deterioration of this historic Eltham building. It is expected that details of proposed site development and use of the cottage will soon be available.

The combined historical societies of Nillumbik are participating in a course at the Eltham Living and Learning Centre entitled Tales of Old Nillumbik. It will be held on Tuesdays throughout Term 4, commencing in October. Members are encouraged to enrol for the course or perhaps one or more sessions. Each session is to be conducted by one of the societies or groups. Contact the Living and Learning Centre for details.

At the "On the Hill" Festival at Panton Hill, Harry Gilham plans to set up a display based on the War Memorial Tower at Kangaroo Ground. This display will be aimed at identifying further servicemen from the local area. The date of this festival is 16 October.

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