

# **ELTHAM DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**Incorporated**

No. A0016285F

**728 MAIN ROAD (PO BOX 137) ELTHAM 3095**

## **NEWSLETTER**

**NO. 166 JANUARY 2006**

**NEXT MEETING**

**8-00 PM WEDNESDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY**

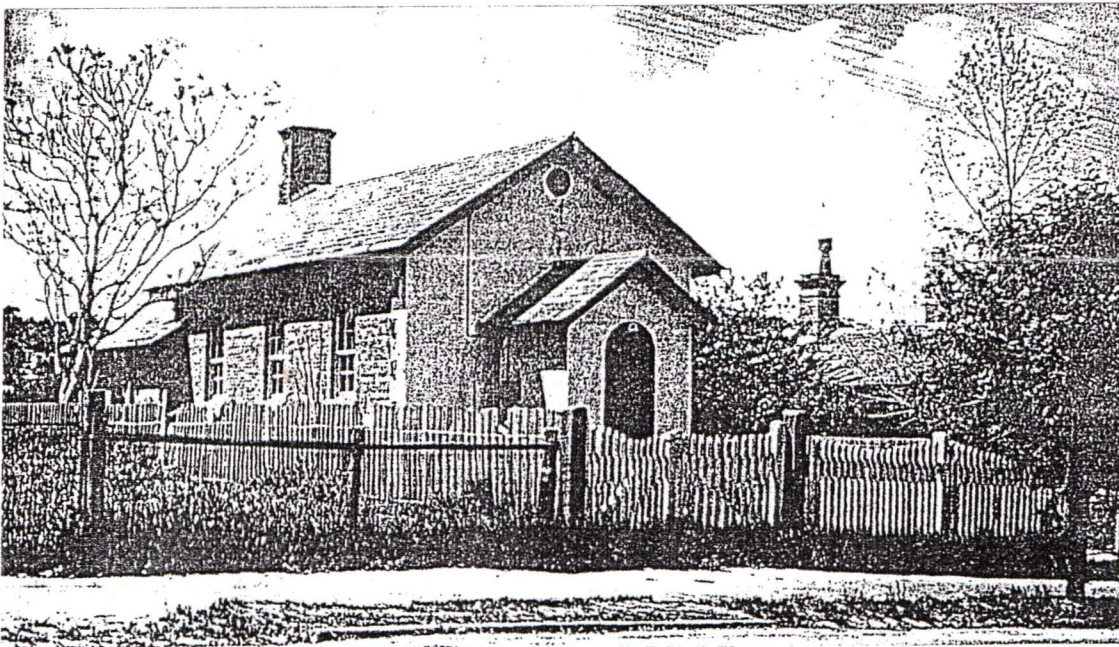
**PANEL PRESENTATION**

**"THE ELTHAM JUSTICE PRECINCT"**

**ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZENS' CENTRE**

**LIBRARY PLACE ELTHAM**

**(FORMERLY OLD SHIRE OFFICE DRIVEWAY)**



**Eltham Court House c1949**

## FEBRUARY MEETING

The Eltham Justice Precinct is the title given by the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) to the two sites at 728 and 730 Main Road Eltham containing the former Eltham police station, now our local history centre, and the former court house. The Land Stewardship-Historic Places section of DSE has recently completed a conservation management plan for the precinct. It provides information on the historical background, description of the sites and buildings and guidelines for their on-going management and conservation.

Both sites are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR).

The VHR Statement of Significance for the Court House is as follows:-

- 1. The Eltham Court House dates from the time when the town was largely self-contained. It was initiated in response to itinerant gold prospectors who turned to crime when their quest was unsuccessful. This type of localised solution is characteristic of the self reliance preserved in Eltham today. The court house is an important symbol of the spirit which makes Eltham distinctive as a community.*
- 2. The nature of the court house planning and use of architectural devices make the building's function easily interpreted. The arrangement of rooms, with public entry and clerical rooms to the rear, and the use of raised floor levels throughout these spaces to signify relative rank is easily perceived. The distinction in entries, public, magistrate and person-in-custody, and the existing court furniture enhances appreciation of this building.*
- 3. The Eltham Court House, built in 1860, is one of only two intact examples in the state of this simple design with projecting entry.*
- 4. The building is of architectural significant because it retains intact early features. These include use of handmade bricks, simple decoration, roof trusses, timber ceiling boards, original windows, doors and associated hardware and a collection of court furniture. Additions to the court house have been done in a manner which did not interfere with the fabric of the original building.*

The VHR Statement of Significance for the Police Residence is as follows:-

*The Former Police Quarters, Eltham are part of a larger police complex designed by the Public Works Department and were built by Langridge, Wright and Witney in 1859-60. The original single storey residence consisting of five rooms is constructed of brick and has a projecting front room and a timber verandah. Subsequent additions have been constructed of weatherboards. Following the relocation of police operations in 1952, the residence was used as the local office of the Lands Department and more recently as offices for the local council's Parks and Environment Section. The original single stall brick stables building with loft, built in 1859-60, is located at the rear of the residence but has been substantially altered. The original two-cell bluestone lockup was demolished c.1950s. The existing detached weatherboard building, located close to the residence, is a c.1980s replica of the original police office which was located in the same position but was initially relocated to the rear of the site but subsequently demolished.*

## PRESIDENT'S NOTES

My 2006 Diary has already been marked with

The 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Eltham Primary School to be celebrated in August 2006.

The 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the now Eltham High School which was attached to the Eltham Primary School from 1926 to 1949 when it was then proclaimed as a Secondary High School and to operate as a 'stand alone' High School from January 1<sup>st</sup> 1950.

The 39<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of this Society, formerly known as the Shire of Eltham Historical Society.

The 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Tower of Remembrance opening by the Governor General of Australia Lord Stonehaven on 11.11.1926.

My recent browsing of historical records has produced the following items of interest:-

16/7/1919 To: *Police Constable Cone  
Inspector of Nuisances  
Eltham*

*Dear Sir*

*I have been instructed by my Council to ask if you would take the necessary action to have the occupier of the tea shop at the corner of Arthur Street, Eltham to have a proper screen erected around the W.C. on his premises.*

*It is pointed out that the closet is often open to the public view and that persons entering or leaving same may be inadvertently seen from the main street.*

*Your early attention is desired.*

*Yours ffly (sic)  
W. B. Thomas, Shire Secretary.*

4/7/1918 *Mrs E. K. Hanrahan  
School Committee  
Kangaroo Ground*

*Madam*

*In reply to yours of the 28<sup>th</sup> ult. I am instructed to inform you that Council has granted permission for the planting of an avenue of trees on the Eltham-Yarra Glen Road between the Shire Office and School at Kangaroo Ground.*

*It is requested that the trees be planted not less than 9 feet from the building line at a distance apart of not less than 10 feet.*

*Yours faithfully  
Acting - Shire Secty.*

Historic note. The Eltham Council was housed in the former Evelyn Observer building near to the Yarra Glen turn off. This could have been an 'Arbour Day' project for the school.

Harry Gilham  
President - 1993 - 2005

*The Former Police Quarters, Eltham is historically and architecturally significant to the State of Victoria.*

*The Former Police Quarters, Eltham, together with the brick stables, are historically significant for their early date of construction. The buildings are important for their relationship with the nearby court house which together form an example of an early justice precinct. The residence and stables are also important for their association with the earliest development of Eltham township. The Former Police Quarters, Eltham is architecturally significant as one of the earliest examples of police buildings erected throughout Victoria in the mid nineteenth century. The simple detailing and lack of ornament are important features as they reflect the building's utilitarian function and demonstrate an important period in the development of the Public Works Department.*

Landscaping works for this precinct have recently been carried out with State Government and Council funding. These works and the D.S.E. conservation plan have focussed attention on these sites and their important buildings and now is considered an appropriate time for a detailed examination of them at our meeting.

Harry Gilham and Russell Yeoman will lead the discussion, utilizing Society records and the D.S.E. report. Harry's research includes a significant collection of newspaper articles on early court cases and police news and these will be used for added interest. Because of the limited availability of our one copy of the D.S.E. report it is appropriate to incorporate direct reading of some of the more interesting sections.

Jim Connor will provide visual interest with computer images of the precinct including some of his own recent photographs.

Since we have been operating our Local History Centre on this site there have been various snippets of information at meetings and in the Newsletter. This will be our most comprehensive look at these two important sites.

#### **NILLUMBIK CITIZEN OF THE YEAR**

Congratulations to Mick and Marg Woiwod who have been awarded the title of Joint Nillumbik Citizens of the Year 2006. The announcement of the award was made at the Nillumbik Australia Day Ceremony at the Eltham Community Centre.

The citation included in the ceremony program reads as follows:-

*The Woiwods have made an outstanding local contribution to the environment, community and education. For decades they have been active in many community groups, including Andrew Ross Museum, Nillumbik Reconciliation Group, Kangaroo Ground War Memorial Tower and Remembrance Park, Bend of Islands Conservation Association and the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade. Mick is a published local historian, with Margaret acting as his researcher. They have several books to their credit. Mick and Margaret's contribution to the reconciliation movement will endure for many generations with the development of the GAWA resource trail in Watsons Creek, The Wurundjeri resource kit and the William Barak short story competition. The kit and competition have been acknowledged as a benchmark indigenous education tools for primary schools throughout Victoria.*

## 2006 PROGRAM

Included with this Newsletter is a calendar of events for our Society for 2006 as far as we know them at this stage. Any additional events that come up during the year will be notified in later Newsletters. Nillumbik Council is producing a calendar of events for the combined historical societies of Nillumbik and this should be available soon.

We have arranged speakers or other agenda items for each meeting for the year and they include a wide variety of subjects. We hope to have an excursion to view new works at the Tower of Remembrance at Kangaroo Ground in October. Advice of the date will be provided nearer to the time. Harry has provided a list of anniversaries for the year in his notes elsewhere in the Newsletter.

The program includes Committee meetings and records workshops for the whole of the year. The dates for the first few records workshops are:-

Tuesdays 7.30pm

7<sup>th</sup> February, 7<sup>th</sup> March

Mondays 9.30am

20<sup>th</sup> February, 20<sup>th</sup> March

Members are encouraged to come to the Local History Centre at these times to assist with the work, carry out their own research or perhaps just for a chat.

We are continuing with our program of Eltham heritage walks on the first Saturday of each month. The first walk for the year is on 4<sup>th</sup> February at 2.00pm. Ring Russell on 9439 9717 for bookings.

## INVITATION

Raelene Marshall of the Dry Stone Walls Association of Australia spoke at our September 2005 meeting on the role of dry stone walls in the Australian landscape.

The February excursion of this association will be a visit to Eltham on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup>. In the morning there will be an association meeting at a private house but the afternoon program will comprise a visit to the garden of the noted Eltham landscaper, the late Gordon Ford at 141 Pitt Street, Eltham. Since Gordon's death this natural garden has been maintained by his wife Gwen and is regularly open as part of the Australian Open Garden Scheme. Members of our Society and other interested locals are invited to attend but in order to regulate attendance it is necessary to make a booking by email to [dswaa@optusnet.com.au](mailto:dswaa@optusnet.com.au) or ring Bev or Lois at Yarra Group on 9438 3322. The visit commences at 1.15 pm and the cost of the excursion for non-members of the association is \$10.

As well as an inspection of the garden and its outstanding rock landscaping there will be a demonstration of dry stone walling by international experts Alistair Tune and Gerhard Steiniger. The new wall will form part of a garden project planned by Gwen.

## WINGROVE COTTAGE UPDATE

From time to time over the past three years or so we have been reporting in the Newsletter regarding on-going issues at Wingrove Cottage, 672 Main Road Eltham. In 2004 the heritage consultants Nigel Lewis and Carlotta Kellaway spoke to the Society on the history and heritage status of this important early Eltham building.

In September 2002, the rear part of the house was demolished without the necessary permits. The earlier front section remained but in very poor condition. As a result of action taken by the Council a court ordered Conservation Management Plan was prepared by Nigel Lewis Pty Ltd on behalf of the owner. The plan included conservation guidelines for the cottage and for the site. Recommendations for the site include guidelines for new buildings and tree preservation measures.

Since then the property has been sold and restoration works have been carried out on the cottage (but the demolished section has not been rebuilt). The new owner has submitted a planning permit application to the Council for a significant development on the site. Under this application the cottage is to be used as a restaurant. A separate café or tea room would be built beside the cottage and a two storey building, comprising small shops with an office above, would be built close to the rear of the cottage. At the rear of the site eight double storey dwellings are proposed.

The Society has objected to the application on grounds relating to the heritage values of the cottage and the site. Other submissions to the Council specify wider grounds of objection including the opinion that the proposal is an overdevelopment of the site. No decision has yet been made by the Council. Whatever its decision the matter is likely to be referred to the Victorian Civil Administrative Tribunal for the final decision.

A more recent planning permit application has been made for use of the cottage as a photographic gallery. This appears to be an alternative proposal to allow use of the cottage while the development application is being decided.

#### **OTHER NEWS**

We have received Christmas greetings from our friends Margaret Taylor and Clifford Crate of Eltham England. They give news of the activities of the Eltham Society which is celebrating its fortieth anniversary. Clifford at 88 is now moving very slowly and has some trouble with seeing and hearing properly.

Last year the Society objected to a proposal by Nillumbik council to demolish the early Eltham farm house at 68 Susan Street. After lengthy consideration the Council has made a decision to grant a permit to demolish the building. Since construction of the adjoining skateboard facility the building has been severely vandalised to the extent that restoration is probably impractical. We have expressed to the Council's Planning Committee our disappointment that the Council has not kept this historic building secure from damage until a decision could be made on its future.

The Society has purchased a multi purpose printer which also function as a scanner and copier. The Committee is yet to decide on a policy for its use by members.

Harry Gilham  
President

Russell Yeoman  
Secretary

Gwen Orford  
Treasurer /  
Membership Secretary  
Phone 9439 8642

Phone - 9439 1175

Phone - 9439 9717