

ELTHAM DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Incorporated

No. A0016285F

728 MAIN ROAD (PO BOX 137) ELTHAM 3095

NEWSLETTER

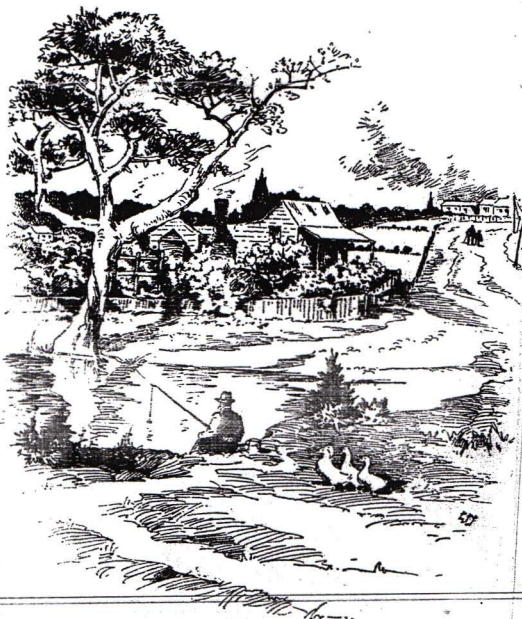
NO. 167 MARCH 2006

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

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

**GUEST SPEAKER HEATH PAYNTER
"BOHEMIA ON THE URBAN FRINGE"**

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VILLAGE POND.

HISTORICAL WALKS PROGRAM

**SATURDAY 4 MARCH
SATURDAY 1 APRIL
SATURDAY 6 MAY**

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

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

To satisfy the requirements of the Society's rules, notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Eltham District Historical Society Incorporated will be held at 8.00 pm on Wednesday 8 March 2006 at the Eltham Senior Citizens' Centre.

The Agenda of the Annual General Meeting is set out below in accordance with the rules. Further detail will be given in the March Newsletter.

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of 2005 Annual General Meeting
3. Reports:
 - a. President's Report
 - b. Treasurer's Report
 - c. Any other reports.
4. Election of office bearers and ordinary members of committee positions to be filled as follows:
 - President
 - Senior Vice President
 - Junior Vice President
 - Treasurer/Membership Secretary
 - Ordinary Committee Members (not less than three and not more than six)
5. Fixing of entrance fee (if any) and annual subscription
6. Any other business of which at least two weeks notice has been given to members

It should be noted that under the Society's rules nominations of office bearers should be made in writing to the Secretary not less than seven days before the meeting.

Nominations should be signed by two members of the Society and accompanied by the written consent of the candidate. If insufficient nominations are received further nominations shall be received at the meeting. However, it should be noted that where a valid prior nomination is received it will have priority and no nomination for that position can be accepted at the meeting.

Each year we urge members to contribute to the running of our Society by becoming an office bearer or committee member and we have the same message again this year. Please give the matter some consideration and if in doubt discuss it with one of our office bearers. The work load is not great. There are usually just six committee meetings each year, alternating with our general meetings. We warmly welcome fresh ideas to help us run a vibrant organisation and increase our membership.

HEATH PAYNTER

Heath Paynter grew up in Eltham in the 1980s and 90s and developed an interest in the Bohemian lifestyle for which Eltham had gained a certain notoriety many years earlier. In 2001 he combined this interest with extensive research to produce a thesis for his Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree which bore the title "Bohemia on the Urban Fringe, Eltham 1930s-1950s. This thesis and some follow up work by Heath will form the basis of his talk to the Society following the A.G.M.

We don't want to steal too much of Heath's thunder but to set the scene it is worth including here some extracts from the introduction to his thesis:-

In 1935, Justus Jorgensen began building Montsalvat, an artists' colony on the outskirts of Melbourne. His creation, a superbly designed quasi-gothic suite of buildings is the most visible relic of one of the oldest alternative communities in Australia. Before he founded

Montsalvat, Jorgensen trained as an architect and painter, also casting himself as a philosopher. Jorgensen was a disciple of Max Meldrum, one of the leading advocates of realism and tonal painting in Australia. Known as the Meldrumites, Meldrum's students consciously followed an alternative lifestyle challenging social conventions. These free thinkers criticised religious faith and sported long beards as a sign of their libertine aspirations. As Jorgensen asserted his own talents as an artist he and Meldrum fell into conflict. Meldrum's dogmatic approach to art inhibited Jorgensen who had developed his own independent philosophy of art.

In creating Montsalvat, Jorgensen set out to re-create the kind of village he had seen while travelling in France. Relying on mud as the primary building material he reproduced his rustic vision with the few resources he had at his disposal. The mud was complemented by recycled building materials such as solid timber doors, window frames and cast iron staircases salvaged from various wreckers around Melbourne to give an aged appearance. Like Meldrum, Jorgensen moulded his ideas of art and aesthetics into a lifestyle which he followed throughout his life. The defiant eccentricity of Montsalvat made it one of the most significant bohemian enclaves in Australia during the 1930s and 1940s.

Montsalvat provides a focal point for Eltham bohemia. This thesis seeks to explain Eltham's influence in the Australian bohemian tradition that emanated from Marcus Clarke in the 1860s to the Sydney Push of the 1950s. But as I will illustrate, Eltham was a distinctive variation on this bohemian tradition. It belonged to the urban fringe rather than the inner city. To the artist, this was a tradition started by the Heidelberg school painters and continued through the literary tradition of the Bulletin writers.

Montsalvat was the catalyst for a wider movement of people who joined its ranks. Several other students who were accorded the task of mudbrick making, excavating, paving and carving joined Jorgensen at Montsalvat. The collective spirit of Montsalvat worked to forge an autonomous and defiant community.

Joining the Montsalvat sphere was a wider group of people who moved to its outskirts in the Eltham area. They adapted and copied aspects of Montsalvat, developing a new strain of bohemia that redirected the energies of Jorgensen's pioneering experiment into new channels. The catalyst was Alistair Knox who developed a way of using locally made mudbricks to build houses that did not interfere with the gradient or the natural habitat of the land. He recast Eltham bohemia into a distinctive lifestyle intimately linked to the environment. Knox's innovation in architecture shaped a deeper awareness of the natural landscape and the special characteristics of the Eltham environment. His achievement inspired the working relationship that Gordon Ford and Clifton Pugh developed with natural landscape. In creating this intimate relationship with the landscape, they distinguished Eltham from the limited connection Jorgensen forged with Eltham.

*Eltham also became the home for a number of progressive academics and writers. Like Jorgensen before them, Eltham became a refuge. Their personal connection to the area was limited. They remained at a distance from the close relationship Knox and Ford developed with the landscape. In the field of the arts, conservationist Clifton Pugh's co-operative Dunmoochin was the most visible sign of this movement. People like Clem Christesen, Alan Marshall, William Macmahon Ball and Frank Dalby Davison conveyed similar notions of nationalism in their own fields to those being espoused by Knox and Pugh. *Bohemia On The Urban Fringe: Eltham 1930s – 1950s*, is a thematic account of an alternative community before it invariably became trivialised, romanticised and a part of the mainstream.*

Out of this the romantic notions generated by the bourgeois about the happenings of the Elthamites exposed its lifestyle to the wider populace. As outside interest in Eltham

increased, accordingly its exclusivity waned. As Melbourne gradually expanded during the post war years Eltham's unspoilt appearance diminished. Like other past bohemian communities it has become a story waiting to be told.

A COTTAGE HISTORY

We are continuing this year with our series of heritage walks on the first Saturday of each month. Generally we alternate the walks with one going north from the Local History Centre and the next going south. There may be other variations with particular themes. The walk on 4 March will take the southern route. One of the features of interest on this walk is Jarrold (or White Cloud) Cottage at 701 Main Road. The cottage, probably dating from the 1850's is situated on the corner of the lane that is the eastern part of Dalton Street extending from Main Road to the Diamond Creek. On the same property is a small former bootmaker's shop facing Main Road and the large Skipper studio/dwelling sitting on posts above the Diamond Creek floodplain. This structure was built over many years in the 1960s.

In the Eltham Heritage Study (EHS) David Bick describes the significance of the site as follows:-

This modest house, shop and studio have historical significance for their associations with the Jarrolds, one of Eltham's pioneer families of market gardeners and building tradesmen over six decades and from the early 1940s, with the Skippers and other prominent local figures involved in the construction and development of the Montsalvat Artists' Colony. Thekla Jarrold's son, Len, a carpenter, worked at Montsalvat from the beginning and became foreman of works for the splendid 1938 Great Hall. The Skipper family, also involved with Montsalvat, were associated with Jarrold Cottage from 1944 when it was purchased by Lena, wife of Mervyn Skipper, and mother of Matcham, the well-known jeweller, and the artists, Helen and Sonia Skipper. The cottage is one of the oldest dwellings in the Shire of Eltham and one of the small number of nineteenth century dwellings anywhere in the Municipality.

The 1930s one room weatherboard shop is the only such structure anywhere in the Shire and strongly associated with the first half of the 20th century when Main Road was a country road passing through a small village, so different from suburban Eltham that took off barely more than two decades later.

The Skipper studio is one of the Shire's finest exotically designed Eltham style buildings, and is uniquely raised on log section posts, to be above the flood levels of Diamond Creek which is close by.

In the EHS Dr Carlotta Kellaway sets out the history of the site as follows:-

An Eltham pioneer, William Jarrold, gardener (most probably a market gardener) purchased the rear section of the Jarrold Cottage property in 1853-54 from the early developer, Josiah M. Holloway, for £14. Holloway's 1850s Little Eltham subdivision became Eltham's first town centre. The property comprised about three acres of land stretching from Maria Street (the original main road) back to the Diamond Creek in Lots 27-32 in Crown Portion 12 Section 4 in Holloway's subdivision. This was only part of the present site and did not include the portion on which the Main Road frontage of the cottage now stands, which was on the opposite side of the road. The Jarrolds did not secure legal ownership of the whole site until 1903, long after the 1863 realignment of the road.

Lot 33 and part of Lot 35 (included in the present property), then on the other side of Maria Street, were purchased from Holloway by Thomas Dugdale Sherer and John Wendon for £4 and £2 respectively. A search of Eltham rate records suggests that the owners of these lots did not build there. However, Jarrold began to build from an early date. It has been thought

that a Jarrold cottage which was used as a temporary police station in 1856 (prior to the construction of the police residence on the corner of Brougham Street) may be the earliest part of the Main Road Cottage. However, Jarrold owned other properties in John and Bible Streets.

The first surviving 1858 Eltham Road District rent roll listed Jarrold as the owner and occupier of 'hut and land'. In 1859, he was also rated for a second small hut. By 1861 the larger building was described as a four-roomed wooden cottage. Later, in 1863, this cottage was described as 'wood and brick'. It seems most likely that this was the earliest portion of Jarrold Cottage. However it is difficult to determine exactly when Jarrold built on Lot 33 (originally on the other side of Maria Street), which he did not legally own until 1876-1881. Unregistered dealings were common at the time, and Jarrold may have been involved in such a dealing. Certainly, from 1863 it would have been easier with the realignment of Maria Street so that the new road frontage included Lot 33 and part of Lot 35. An 1863 map held at the Central Plan Office, Melbourne, titled Alterations Made in the Road Between Eltham and the Kangaroo Ground at the Request of the Eltham Road Board may have merely given official approval to a change that had already taken place.

Thomas Wall, labourer, became the owner of Lot 33 in 1869. Earlier, Wall had occupied a house owned by James Brown, but, from 1870 he occupied a hut. This may have been the Jarrold hut listed from 1859. It was obviously important for Jarrold to acquire Lot 33 and, between 1876 and 1881, he paid £80 to Wall for it, a substantial sum of money at the time.

In 1903, following William Jarrold's death, his family acquired part of the site of the original Maria Street and part of Lot 35 as the result of a successful claim of 'adverse possession'. A sketch drawn at the time in Registrar-General's Office records showed the front fence and front door of the Jarrold house within Lot 35, bounded by the Main Road (still known as Maria Street). A 1903 article titled "Eltham. A Popular Holiday Spot" contained a sketch of the cottage at this time. Despite the extension of the railway to Eltham in June 1902, the township, then located in the vicinity of Jarrold Cottage, was described as "like a Surrey or Sussex village, particularly with its village pond (so essentially English) reflecting in its clear water a quaint cottage, dwarfed by a huge gum tree. There were sketches of the village pond, the hostelry and an orchardist's homestead. The willow trees south of Jarrold Cottage today mark the site of the old pond, which the Shire Council evidently filled in to stop mosquitos breeding.

The Jarrold family continued to live in the cottage until the 1930s. During the 1920s and 1930s, the owner was Thekla Jarrold. In 1937-38 she was rated for a weatherboard house in Main Road and four acres of land. A smaller weatherboard house in John Street was owned and occupied by Alice Jarrold. Some alterations and additions seem to have been made to the Main Road Cottage during Thekla's ownership. A boot shop (which remains today) is thought to have been built for a tenant in the 1930s, while a shingle roof was replaced with iron by Thekla's son Len, a carpenter. Len worked at the Montsalvat Artists' Colony from its beginning and became foreman of works for the 1938 Great Hall.

In 1944, Mrs Lena Skipper, the wife of Mervyn Skipper, became the new owner of Jarrold Cottage, purchasing it as an investment. She also acquired other Jarrold properties including land and a house in Bible Street previously owned by Charles Leonard and Vera May Jarrold. During the Skipper ownership other alterations and additions were carried out. An elevated studio was built at the rear of the property at this time, designed as Matcham Skipper's studio. The Skipper family has played a major role in Eltham Shire's development as a centre of artistic endeavour. Lena was the mother of Matcham, the jeweller, and artists, Helen and Sonia Skipper.

Today, Jarrold Cottage remains as a rare 19th century survivor, despite later alterations and additions, and retains its old weatherboard outbuildings and Matcham Skipper's studio at the rear.

Ring Russell on 9439 9717 to book for this walk or any of the later walks.

NILLUMBIK COMBINED HISTORY GROUPS

At our November meeting our Society agreed to support incorporation of an association comprising the combined historical societies of Nillumbik Shire. Most other groups have also agreed and a working party has been established to prepare a constitution. Contact Harry Gilham if you require more information on this matter.

Katrina Rank from Nillumbik Council is producing a calendar of events for each of the groups. Copies will be sent to members when it is printed. In the meantime a draft version will be available at the March meeting or contact Russell Yeoman for any enquiries.

Nillumbik Historical Society are very proud of their new barn at Ellis Cottage opened at a ceremony on 12 February. This badly needed storage building was achieved with financial help from Nillumbik Council and architectural assistance from Dennis Ward.

Mick Woiwod has advised of the publication of his privately commissioned book "Boat-O-Craigie". This is a history of the Graham family of Scotland, Kangaroo Ground, Lancefield and other places. This well presented publication is limited to 100 copies for family members.

OTHER NEWS

Russell Yeoman has been appointed to two advisory groups set up by Nillumbik Shire Council. One is a "Panel of Experts" set up to oversee restoration of a property at Laughing Waters Road, Eltham formerly owned by the late Gordon Ford. It is now owned by Parks Victoria and leased to the Council. It contains two mud brick houses; one known as "Birrarung" and the other known as "Boomerang" because of its curved shape. The other is an advisory committee for the development of a master plan for future development at Edendale Farm, Gastons Road, Eltham.

Anne Williams of Eltham East Primary School spoke to the Society last year about the excellent project of the school choir called "Local Heroes". The children researched and wrote about a number of Eltham identities, living and dead, and then the words were set to music by composer Stephen Leek. The Local Heroes collection of songs, together with other renditions by the choir, is available on a CD called 'Always Remember'. It is available from the school for \$25.00 (plus \$4.00 postage). For information ring Vivien Williamson on 9439 9852

Upcoming dates for records workshops at the Local History Centre are as follows:-

Tuesdays 7.30pm	7 March,	4 April,	2 May
Mondays 9.30am	20 March,	21 April	

We encourage members to make these workshops a regular part of their society activities. There is plenty of filing work to be done and the opportunity can be taken for a bit of a chat with other members.

Harry Gilham
President

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Russell Yeoman
Secretary

Phone - 9439 9717

Gwen Orford
Treasurer /
Membership Secretary
Phone 9439 8642