

ELTHAM DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Incorporated

No. A0016285F

728 MAIN ROAD (PO BOX 137) ELTHAM 3095

NEWSLETTER NO. 168 MAY 2006

COMING MEETINGS

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

**8-00 PM WEDNESDAY 11TH MAY
GUEST SPEAKER LIZ PIDGEON
LOCAL HISTORY LIBRARIAN**

**8-00 PM WEDNESDAY 14TH JUNE
THE REYNOLDS/PRIOR PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION**



Henry Dendy as an old man.
See story on page 3

HISTORICAL WALKS PROGRAM

**SATURDAY 6 MAY
SATURDAY 3 JUNE**

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

MAY MEETING

Last year the Yarra Plenty Regional Library appointed Liz Pidgeon as its first dedicated local history librarian. Since then Liz has been actively developing local history resources and programs at the various branch libraries. She is also pursuing links with the various historical societies and similar groups throughout the region.

At the May meeting Liz will talk to us about the local history resources available throughout the library system and particularly Eltham Library. She will also cover the history of our regional library system and just what her role entails. Her talk will be illustrated with a computer based pictorial presentation.

Members and anyone else interested in our local history should find this a most interesting and informative evening.

THE REYNOLDS/PRIOR PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION

Ivy Reynolds comes from a long established Research family and has lived all of her life in the family home in Thompson Crescent, much of it with her late sister Margaret. Reynolds Road is named after the family.

The Reynolds/Prior collection of photographs were taken by Ivy's uncle, Tom Prior, around 1908. The fifty photographs give a fine overview of many of the landmarks of Research and Eltham some 100 years ago.

Through Ross McDonald, another Research resident, Ivy has offered a copy of the collection to our Society and another copy is to go to the Andrew Ross Museum. The presentation is to be made at a special combined meeting with museum members to take place at 8.00pm on Wednesday 14th June. This meeting is additional to the regular meetings published in our program for the year. The photographs have been copied for computer projection and will be shown in this format at the meeting. Ivy plans to attend the meeting to share family reminiscences and anecdotes with us. These photographs are a reminder of the rural nature of Research and Eltham and the heritage of the area. There are also many landmark buildings and scenes of Eltham. Thanks are due to Ivy for her generosity and to Ross for his initiative in making the arrangements.

Please bring along a small contribution to supper after the meeting.

A committee meeting is scheduled in the Society's Program for 14th June. This meeting will now take place on Wednesday 7th June at 7.30pm.

OFFICE BEARERS 2006-7

At the Annual General Meeting in March all of the office bearers and committee members from last year were re-elected for the coming year. This included Gwen Orford as Treasurer/Membership Secretary, a position she has held for many years. In recent times Gwen has been acting in a caretaker role in this position and has been anxious to relinquish it for health reasons.

David Johns has now agreed to accept this position and accordingly he has been appointed by the Committee in accordance with the Society's rules to fill the vacancy. Gwen will remain as a member of the Committee and will continue to post out our Newsletter.

Many thanks to Gwen for her years of managing this difficult position and carrying on during the long search for a replacement. Thanks also to David for accepting this responsibility.

The full list of office bearers and committee members is now as follows:-

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

The Committee welcomes ideas for Society activities or for the better functioning of the Society. Contact one of the people listed if you have any suggestions.

WALKING WITH HENRY DENDY

The Society's heritage walks programme continues with walks scheduled for the first Saturday of each month. Generally these walks alternate with one month heading north from the Local History Centre and the next month heading south. For the walk on the 6th May it has been decided to vary the sequence and visit the area to the east. The walk will include Franklin and John Streets, two of narrow streets of Holloway's 1851 "Little Eltham" subdivision. It will pass through the "mud brick precinct" at the eastern end of John Street. At the Main Road end it will include some of the features of the northern walk.

Common to both the eastern and northern walks is Henry Dendy's Eltham land purchased by him in 1856. The land is in two sections. To the west of Main Road (now part of the Eltham Community Centre site) was Dendy's house and his flour mill at the rear beside the Diamond Creek. On the east side of Main Road (then known as Maria Street) Dendy's land ran from Pitt Street to John Street. Part of this land was donated by Dendy in 1860 as the site for St. Margaret's Church. The church remains in well preserved state today and is included in the Victorian Heritage Register.

It is worth reflecting on the life of Henry Dendy (1800-1881) and particularly his connections with Eltham. We will deal with the history of St. Margaret's at another time.

Dendy is best known as the founder of Brighton, but it is not so well known that years later he lived at Eltham for far longer than he lived at Brighton.

In 1840 while still in England he bought eight square miles of unspecified land in the Port Phillip District. This entitled him to bring a number of other persons to the colony and in 1841 he arrived at Williamstown in the "York" with his family and 139 others. He took up his land entitlement at what is now Brighton and most of the emigrants settled there. He encountered financial problems and lost his interest in the estate in 1844. He left Brighton in 1847. He successively but not always

successfully became a brewer at Geelong, a sheep farmer at Christmas Hills and Upper Moira, a flour miller at Eltham, a sheep farmer again at Werribee and finally a copper miner at Walhalla.

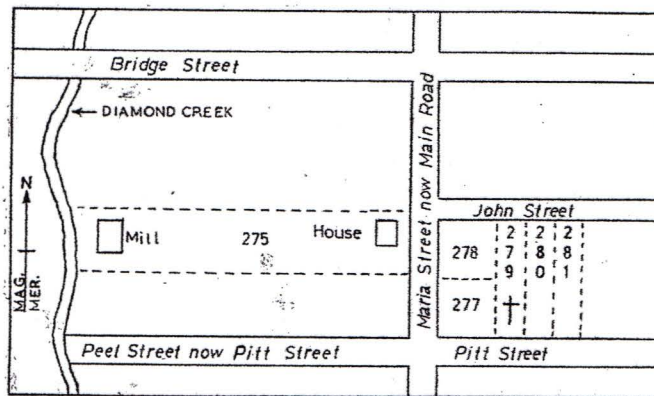
Dendy came to Eltham in 1856 after having spent a year in England. The total of the two parcels of land that he bought was about 5 acres (2 hectares) and it included the steam flour mill. He became prominent in local affairs, serving for a time on the Eltham District Road Board, including one year as President.

Dendy's wife Sarah died at Eltham in 1860 and also in that year he was appointed chairman of a committee to establish a Church of England in Eltham. He donated one of his Pitt Street lots for this purpose and St. Margaret's was opened in 1861.

In 1867 Dendy sold his mill to W. F. Ford and moved to Werribee and then Walhalla where he remained until his death. He is buried in the Walhalla cemetery.

No sign of Dendy's house or mill remain on the Community Centre site but some of the old trees running along the former boundary through the centre of the site could well have been planted in Dendy's time.

Much of this information was obtained from the book "Henry Dendy and his Emigrants" by L. A. Schumer (Sallas Books 1975). The Society has an extensive file of Dendy information, much of it provided by the late Leslie Schumer.



Map of Dendy's Eltham land from "Henry Dendy and His Emigrants" by LA Schumer

SUBSCRIPTIONS

At the Annual General Meeting subscriptions for 2006-7 were fixed as follows:

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

These are the same as for the previous year.

Subscriptions are due on 1st July but earlier payment is welcomed. David would be happy to receive your money at either the May meeting or the special June meeting.

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

The pathways around the Court House and our Local History Centre at 728-730 Main Road Eltham are under scrutiny for safer usage by people accessing the site and particularly the court rooms:-

1. With cars parking in the back yard the problem arises as to using the street for larger attendances using cars. Being ever mindful of our ageing members, I have had discussions with the Living and Learning Centre Manager as they have been asked to manage the whole 'precinct', as it is now known, on behalf of the Council.
2. The three entry doors to the Court House all require users to have assistance as they are "stepped" entries.
3. The pathway to the cars parked in the yard is steep with a sand like covering. These are negotiated by the disabled with helpers on each arm. "NOT GOOD ENOUGH" was heard loud and clear.
4. The darkness of the paths, especially between the buildings, was not very evident in the summer time. Now that we have all had to change our clocks back to "real time" lighting must be established as soon as possible. The works should be done at Council's expense and also be paid for through Council's meter in the Court House.
5. Use of the rooms at the Court House will be by booking them at the Living and Learning Centre.
6. The other "tenants" at 728 still remain as the two garden clubs and the Eltham Concert Band which still stores its sheet music in the weatherboard 'Police Office' facsimile beside the house.
7. Our Committee has sent a letter to the Living and Learning Centre Manager stressing the fact that a car access area should be maintained off Main Road for use by cars transporting goods and people to our gatherings for obvious reasons.
8. The steel gates off Brougham Street into the back yard should be replaced with a lockable barrier suitable for the wide opening that is there.
9. Looking at the Council plan it is obvious that all the pathways were not constructed. This is an issue for the community usage of the site.
10. Some other brief observations are as follows:-
 - Meanwhile, it is good to see that there are now downpipes from the stable roof.
 - The large tree between the house and court at the front is to be totally removed as it is causing damage to the foundations and slate roofs.
 - The timber 'leantos' on the brick stables are being repaired.
 - Our broken windows in the house have been repaired by Council.

- The nature strip is being cut but NOT the new grass areas planted in the front of the buildings.
- The garden groups are planning plant sales on the car park area.

Harry Gilham

MYSTERY PAINTING

Nillumbik Council has passed on to the Society a painting which was offered to it by John Layt. The painting is un-named and un-signed and considered to be not suitable for the Council's art collection.

The letter from the Council about the painting states as follows:-

"We understand the painting was in the house in 2 Stanley Avenue Eltham when the Layt family took up residence there and removed by them before the house was demolished.

We have been able to ascertain that the former owner of the property from 1950 to 1997 was Marie Ellen Oldfield. No further investigation has been carried out.

In accordance with the wishes of John Layt, the painting needs to be available to the people of Eltham. The work, which may have been completed by more than one person, obviously has a history and some significance to Eltham."

The painting is in two parts having been damaged at some stage. It appears to be composite scene including mountains and the sea or a lake. Part of it could represent Eltham but certainly not the whole of it. If it is of significance to Eltham then it would be because of who painted it rather than the subject matter.

Anyone who can throw any light on this matter should contact Russell Yeoman.

OTHER NEWS

Over recent years the cost of insurance for the Society has increased steeply and has become a major item of Society expenditure. The Royal Historical Society of Victoria has advised that it has now negotiated new insurance arrangements for historical societies including significantly reduced premiums and other benefits. This is excellent news at a time when few items are remaining at a constant price let alone being reduced.

Advice has been received from the Eltham Primary School that the date for celebrating its 150th Anniversary is 12th August. This important anniversary is listed in our program as the topic for our September meeting.

Phyllis and Tony Dignan of Eltham England and members of the Eltham Society, visited our Eltham in March. Marion and Russell Yeoman showed them around some of our unique attractions.

Records workshops at the Local History Centre will be held on the following dates:-

Mondays 9.30am	15 th May	19 th June
Tuesdays 7.30pm	6 th June	4 th July

If these dates are unsuitable we would welcome members making arrangements to come at other times to assist with the important tasks of filing and cataloguing our records. Talk to Harry or Russell if you think you might be able to help.

Harry Gilham
President

Russell Yeoman
Secretary

David Johns
Treasurer /
Membership Secretary
Phone - 9434 3357

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