

ELTHAM DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Incorporated

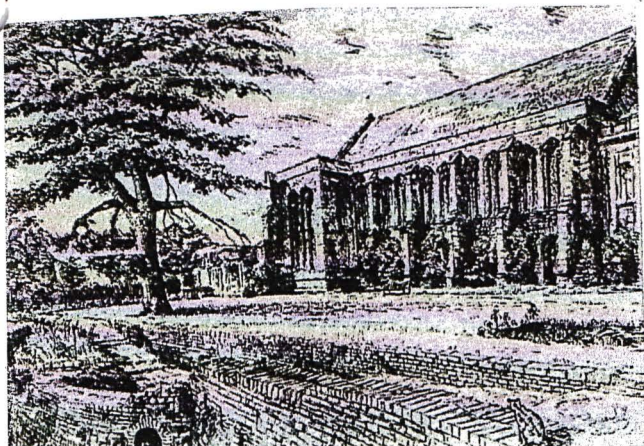
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728 MAIN ROAD (PO BOX 137) ELTHAM 3095

NEWSLETTER NO. 178 JANUARY 2008

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

**8-00 PM WEDNESDAY 13TH FEBRUARY
SLIDE SHOW
ELTHAM ENGLAND RE-VISITED**



HISTORICAL WALKS PROGRAM

**SATURDAY 2ND FEBRUARY
SATURDAY 1ST MARCH
2 PM AT ELTHAM LOCAL
HISTORY CENTRE
BOOKINGS 9439 1175**

The Great Hall at Eltham Palace
Eltham, England.
From a drawing by Hubert Pragnell

ELTHAM ENGLAND RE-VISITED

For many years now we have maintained a connection with the Eltham Society in England. Their home at Eltham in the south eastern outskirts of London is obviously the inspiration for the naming of our Eltham but no one has yet established the reason why.

To celebrate the Australian Bi-centennial in 1988 the Eltham Society produced an outstanding slide show of their district. It included written notes and audio commentary and as a present to our Society it came as a most welcome surprise.

Now twenty years on many of our members have never seen this slide show and to those who have seen it, it is probably a somewhat hazy memory.

The slides have now been converted to digital format and with the assistance of Jim Connor can now be shown in this more convenient format. We have not yet converted the audio tape to digital format but the older and new technologies should work well together.

This opening meeting for 2008 is not restricted to members. Anyone with an interest in learning more about our English namesake is most welcome to attend.

NILLUMBIK CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to our President, Harry Gilham, and his wife Sue Dyet, who have been named as joint Nillumbik Citizens of the Year for 2008. The awards were announced at the Council's Australia Day Ceremony. The awards are a fitting tribute for the many years of outstanding community service by Harry and Sue.

The citation in the ceremony program is as follows:-

In naming Sue Dyet and Harry Gilham joint 2008 Nillumbik Citizens of the Year, the selection panel took into account the decades of community service both of them have given to Nillumbik, and before the formation of Nillumbik, to the citizens of the Shire of Eltham.

Sue's contributions to our community centre on education, environment and gender equality. In the 1980s Sue was the inaugural School Council President of the St Helena Secondary College, and was involved in both the Eltham Primary and Eltham High Schools School Councils. And, Sue set up the Friends of Diamond Creek – Eltham Lower Park group in 1990 and is still active and involved.

Harry's contributions focus on his stalwart efforts to preserve the history of the area – specifically as President of the Eltham Historical Society since 1993, and as Convenor of the Kangaroo Ground War Memorial Tower Committee – a Nillumbik Shire Council Advisory Committee. This Committee has been at the centre of upgrades to the whole park and tower, plus the building of the Moor-rul Viewing Platform.

Congratulations are also due to Lindsay Mann, President of Whittlesea Historical Society who has been named as the City of Whittlesea Citizen of the Year for 2008.

GEOFF BRAITHWAITE, 1913-2007

Our members remember Geoff Braithwaite as an elderly person who often walked to meetings from his home in Greensborough. In earlier years Geoff and his family had lived in the Susan Street part of Eltham, now an industrial area.

Often at meetings Geoff would produce a hand drawn map of Eltham showing with great accuracy houses and other features that he could remember from his younger years.

Sadly Geoff passed away at Christmas time. In recent years he had lived at a nursing home in Jan Juc.

Geoff's funeral service in Eltham was attended by President Harry Gilham and a number of other members. His grandson Mark Smith delivered a eulogy recounting many stories from Geoff's life and has provided a copy for our Society records.

Here is one of his stories:-

I heard how, after working two days at a local apple orchard, Geoff would jump on his bike and ride from Eltham to Colac, a distance of 160 km, taking between 6 — 11 hours, depending on wind direction. He then had three days work lined up on the local salt pans. Men would scrape up the salt into mounds, which would then be loaded onto a heavy wooden sled; once full, the sled would be dragged off the dry lake by a horse on the shore to which it was connected by a long wire. When unloaded the sled needed to be returned out onto the lake to begin the process again — a job the horse couldn't perform and which then fell on a fit, strong lad to do. None of the locals proved to be up to this task, but Geoff, who had strong legs, did prove to be. At the end of his three days' work, Geoff was back on his bike heading back to Eltham to repeat the process all over again.

CELEBRATING NILLUMBIK'S WOMEN

Advice has been received from Mandy Press, Chairperson of the Nillumbik Women's Network, of a project to be held in conjunction with International Women's Day (IWD) on 17th March 2008 but after that, on an on-going basis, the project is called Celebrating Nillumbik's Women. The Network is seeking nominations of appropriate women from both the historical and present day periods. Nominations for the IWD part of the project close on 25th February. Nomination forms and further information are available from Russell Yeoman.

SHILLINGLAW FAMILY HISTORY

The Shillinglaws are a well known family in Eltham's history and their memory is commemorated by the reconstructed Shillinglaw Cottage near the Eltham Library.

Shillinglaw descendant Margaret Ball has been recording the family history over many years. Recently Margaret has been in touch with another Shillinglaw descendant, Elizabeth Crawford, in England. Elizabeth has written an article on the Shillinglaws' voyage to Australia to be included in Ancestors magazine, published by the National Archive in England. With the kind permission of the author and publishers we will include the story in our Newsletter. Because of its length it will be in two parts. Here is the first part.

'Glad were they to rest on Australia's shore'

***'From old Scotland's shore a vessel set sail
Old ocean to cross mid tempest and gale
Full laden with souls bound to a strange shore
Australia's bright land never seen before'***

The vessel was the India, sailing from Greenock on 4 June 1841, bound for Australia. Among the 'souls' aboard were my great-great-great-great grandfather, Phillip Shillinglaw, and four of his children. I trace my descent from a daughter who, already married, remained in Scotland. Although, in the course of research for books and articles, I have spent years investigating the history of others, only recently have I looked at my own family. I was delighted to discover this Australian link, no hint of which had passed

down to me. After a little internet detective work I had the amazing good fortune of making contact with a (very) distant Melbourne relative, Margaret Ball. With her help I have been able to piece together a remarkably full picture of the Shillinglaw family's traumatic voyage and their subsequent life in Australia.

The above lines open an epic poem describing the disaster that befell the *India*, the near miraculous rescue of the majority of its passengers, and their eventual arrival at Port Phillip, then in New South Wales. The author of the poem was Phillip Shillinglaw's grandson and namesake. The manuscript, as in all the best tales of genealogical research, lay un-regarded in a tin box until inherited in 1984 by Margaret Ball, great-great-great granddaughter of Phillip Shillinglaw the emigrant. She wrote that 'This tin box started me on a great chase and a love for family history which is never ending' and of the poem, 'It took me a while to work it out but when I started to check public records it all made sense'. It is certainly unusual to be able to trace so dramatically the experience of steerage emigrants of this period. Much of the information in the poem tallies well with that held in public records. Phillip Shillinglaw the versifier was, of course, retelling the story he had heard from his mother and father, who had both travelled out on the *India*, rather than recounting an official history. I am very grateful to Margaret Ball for permission to quote from the poem.

The Shillinglaws represent the 'everyman' and 'everywoman' of the mid-19th century emigrant movement to Australia. Indeed the year 1841 has come to be regarded as a watershed in the peopling of Australia. The colonies were keen to break from their convict-peopled past and introduce a different kind of settler. Britain's industrious, virtuous working-class, suffering in a severely depressed economy, provided the ideal candidates.

The cost of a steerage passage to Australia was around £17, almost the average annual wage of a rural labourer and about twice the wage of a young female domestic servant. In order to supply Australia with this type of worker a series of schemes were devised to assist their passage, all requiring candidates to fulfil occupation, health, age, and character criteria set by the colonial legislatures. There was a bias towards family groupings, 'protected' single females, and those from rural counties.

The Shillinglaws certainly qualified on that score. They were travelling to Australia from Aberdalgie, a village in Perthshire. I suspect that Phillip Shillinglaw worked in some specialist area of horticulture, perhaps fruit growing, rather than as a general agricultural labourer. On the death certificate of one of his daughters, he is described as a 'botanist'. Two of the daughters he left behind in Scotland were married to estate gardeners and, as we will see, when they reached Australia it was as gardeners, rather than as agricultural labourers or sheep hands, that both he and his son found employment.

Phillip was born in Berwickshire in 1777, probably moving to Maidstone, Kent, with his parents and siblings in the mid-1790s. Certainly he was living in England when he married in St Martin's-in-the-Fields on 25 October 1807. Several of his older children were born in Kent but the birth in Perthshire of the younger ones indicates that the family had returned to Scotland around the mid-1820s. It was at Aberdalgie that three of the older daughters were married. I have found no trace of their mother's death, but assume that in 1841 Phillip was a widower. The little I have been able to deduce from this genealogical study suggests that Philip Shillinglaw was not a man to limit his horizons and that he could write his name. I might have been able to discover more about the family were it not for the irony that the *India* set sail a mere two days before the taking of the first census.

Of the Shillinglaw party, Phillip's son, William, and two of his daughters, Martha and Elizabeth, appear in the Index to Assisted British Immigrants, although with their surname rendered as 'Shillingham'. William was in his mid-20s. Elizabeth's age was given as 21 on her arrival, although she may have been considerably younger. Martha's age is recorded on arrival as 16, which tallies with her death at the age of 65 in 1891.

A slight mystery surrounds the identity of the third female member of the party. Her name is clearly written as 'Catherine Shillinglaw' on a list of passengers. However, nothing is known of a family member of that name and Caroline Shillinglaw, one of Phillip's elder daughters, certainly did travel to Australia. Caroline would have been 31 in 1841 and it is possible that the fifth named member of the party, James Shillinglaw, was her illegitimate son. Neither Catherine/Caroline nor James is recorded on arrival as an assisted passenger.

Phillip, too, is missing from this record, his absence explained by the fact that, at 64, he was well above the qualifying age. It was considered part of the success of the emigration scheme that 'ship-room' was given to elderly family members. This was important in persuading the younger people to emigrate. In this case, however, I rather think that Phillip may himself have been a driving force. He could quite well have stayed quietly in Perthshire with his married daughters.

How would the Shillinglaws have heard about the possibilities of emigration and of the bounty scheme? Emigrant guides, aimed at the working class, had been published since the 1830s. It is quite possible that

the Shillinglaws had studied one of these. Also at this time the emigration scheme was being vigorously promoted in the various regions of rural Scotland. The official responsible for selecting emigrants travelled around, holding meetings, posting broadsheets and distributing circulars.

It was no simple business to apply for an assisted passage. Medical certificates and references were required, as well as money for a deposit, specified clothing and equipment, and the cost of travel to the port of embarkation. But well-informed, self-selecting, literate individuals with initiative could, and clearly did, overcome bureaucratic hurdles.

The voyage of the *India* was handled by Glasgow shipping agents McNeill and Somervall. The ship, described as 'A 1 copper-bottomed', was a three-masted barque of 493 tonnes, relatively new, having been built in Greenock in 1839. It had already completed one round trip to Australia. Passengers in 1841 were advised to be in Greenock by 28 May, ready for the 4 June departure.

It has been calculated that 172 passengers embarked. The ship had a poop cabin, accommodating 20 passengers, but the majority of the emigrants, including the Shillinglaws, travelled steerage. Thus, around 150 men, women and children lived and slept on the lower deck, in what was in effect one dormitory. Although the exact layout of the interior of the *India's* steerage accommodation is unknown, it was usual for married couples and children to be housed in the centre, with the single women and girls in the 'after berths', and the single males and boys in the 'fore-part'. Headroom was just over 6 feet, allowing for two tiers of bunks running along each side of a central table. These berths, usually fitted by the ship's carpenter, were temporary so that they could be removed to make way for cargo on the return journey.

The passengers formed themselves into messes of six at meal times, with a mess captain appointed to collect the rations and take them to the galley for cooking. The *India* was well supplied with fresh meat, having live chicken, geese, pigs and sheep on board. Life in such close quarters could be fraught, but also led to friendships and, indeed, marriages. Seven months after their arrival at Port Phillip, William Shillinglaw married Jean Blamire, a fellow passenger. Their son, Phillip, the versifier, was born three months later.

The motion of the ship, causing, for many, incapacitating sea-sickness, the noise from wind, waves, sails and creaking wood, the threat of disease, and the increasing heat from the sun, combined with the discomfort of living packed together in such a confined space, made life on an emigrant ship at best uncomfortable. The passengers on the *India* were later to look back on the early stage of the voyage as blessedly uneventful.

The first indication that this journey was not to be without complication came when, according to Phillip's poem, the crew mutinied. There is no mention of this incident in official sources, but I am prepared to give credence to his report that:

Now mutiny comes: crew refuses to work
So passengers have to handle the Barque

The crew's dissatisfaction is unexplained and, according to the poem, the mutiny collapsed when they realised the punishment that would result from endangering the ship.

**Near two hundred souls on that vessel's deck
Having no knowledge of how life to save,
Constitutes a crime most fearfully grave.**

After mutiny, the *India* and its passengers next had to contend with the threat of being pillaged by a Spanish pirate ship, the *Gabriel*.

**Soon sea robbers hove in sight of the ship
But do not molest, though round her they slip**

For, having established that the *India* carried a worthwhile cargo - emigrants - the *Gabriel* lost interest and sailed away. Shortly afterwards, however, she was involved in a four-hour gun battle with HM Brig *Acorn* and her crew captured.

OTHER NEWS

Jim Allen of Research has been researching army history and particularly any Eltham connections. He has provided the Society with newspaper clippings and other records of army camps at Eltham Lower Park (then called Eltham Park) mainly in the early 1930s. Anyone with further information on these camps is asked to pass it on to the Society.

Distributed with this Newsletter is our program for 2008 including details of meetings and other activities. We will be continuing with our public heritage walks program and dates are shown for records workshops at our Local History Centre. Members are encouraged to come along to these workshops to assist with the important work of properly filing and cataloguing our collection.

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 8.00pm on Wednesday 12th March 2008 at the Eltham Senior Citizens' Centre...

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

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of 2007 Annual General Meeting
3. Reports
 - a. President's Report
 - b. Treasurer's Report
 - c. Any other reports
5. Election of office bearers and ordinary members of committee positions to be filled as follows:
 - President
 - Senior Vice President
 - Junior Vice President
 - Secretary
 - 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.

Harry Gilham
President

Russell Yeoman
Secretary

David Johns
Treasurer /
Membership Secretary
Phone - 9434 3357

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