

# **ELTHAM DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**Incorporated**

No. A0016285F

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**Website: <http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/edhs/web/HomePage.html>**

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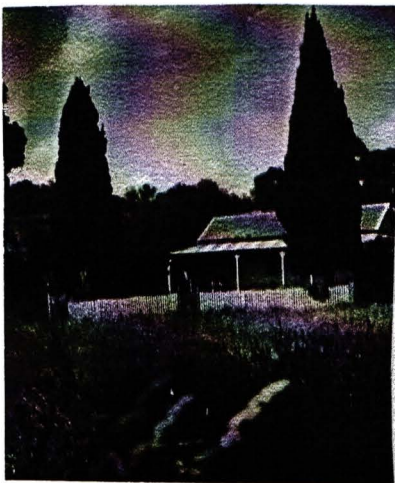
## **NEWSLETTER**

**NO. 182 SEPTEMBER 2008**

### **NEXT MEETING**

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

**8-00 PM WEDNESDAY 10<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER  
"THIS OLD HOUSE - BIRCH COTTAGE"  
A VIDEO PRESENTATION FROM THE  
ANDREW ROSS MUSEUM**



Wingrove Cottage is a feature of the southern walk in our heritage walks program  
From a 1950s photo by George Bell

### **HERITAGE WALKS PROGRAM**

**2.00 PM SATURDAYS  
6TH SEPTEMBER &  
1ST NOVEMBER**

**ELTHAM LOCAL HISTORY  
CENTRE**

**BOOKINGS 9439 9717**

## **SEPTEMBER MEETING**

In the late 1970s when our Society was the Shire of Eltham Historical Society, an offer was made to the Society regarding use of an old cottage at Christmas Hills. For various reasons the offer ultimately lapsed. The cottage sat beside Watsons Creek just outside the then Shire of Eltham but following municipal restructuring it now lies within the Shire of Nillumbik.

At that time some research on the cottage was carried out for the Society by Keith Chappel as part of a larger research project that he was doing. Keith's notes were taken from Lands Department records and showed that house is the subject of a permissive occupancy of Crown land comprising the creek reserve. In 1903 a Miners Right of one acre in area was granted to Edwin Samuel Birch. In 1907 Birch applied to purchase this land but was unable to because it was part of the creek reserve. The documents show that the house existed at that time. Birch died in 1932 and his daughter Honor Mary Birch was granted a permit to occupy the residence.

The future of the cottage remains precarious because of its location on Crown land. In 2007 the Andrew Ross Museum began a campaign to ensure that it is preserved. It included a video presentation on the history of the cottage under the title of "This Old House – Birch Cottage". That presentation forms the subject matter of our September meeting. Representatives of the museum who have been involved with the research and development of the DVD will be present to provide comment and answer questions.

This local project should be of great interest to members for its historical content and as an example of how a local history organisation can apply modern technology to its work.

## **COMING EVENTS**

Apart from our own Society activities there are a number of events over the next few months that may be of interest to members. They include a number of tours, displays and other events that are part of the Art Deco 2008 Regional Festival. Copies of a program for the festival have been provided by the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and will be available at the September meeting. Some events have already been held but the festival continues until the end of September. Events to be held prior to our meeting are at Ballarat on 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> September, Castlemaine 6<sup>th</sup>, Charlton 6<sup>th</sup>, Horsham 7<sup>th</sup>. Ring Russell Yeoman if you would like a copy of the program prior to the meeting.

The Diamond Valley Prostate Cancer Support Group is holding a charity art show at 7pm on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> September at the Eltham Community and Reception Centre. It features paintings and memorabilia of famous Heidelberg School artist Walter Withers. The format is a cocktail party and includes prizes for the best dressed in a period costume. Entry is by donation. RSVP to Robert Phillips on 9431 3154.

The Nillumbik Women's Network Spring Forum will be held at the Eltham Community and Reception Centre from 7 to 9.30pm on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> September. The title of the forum is "Nillumbik Women Speak Out" and it will celebrate the centenary of women's suffrage in Victoria. Guest speaker will be feminist historian Dr Natasha Campo. Entry is by gold coin donation. RSVP to Susan Forbes at 9433 3144

The Friends and Relations of Queenstown Cemetery has issued an invitation to its Annual General Meeting to be held at 2pm on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September at the Panton Hill Living and Learning Centre

in Bishops Road. At the meeting the group will launch its booklet "George Gray, 'Cleir Hills' Nursery and Homestead". This is the first in a series of booklets on goldminers, pioneers and settlers buried at the Queenstown Cemetery.

The 150<sup>th</sup> Birthday of St Andrews will be celebrated on the weekend of 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> November. There will be historical displays and many other events. A new edition of the book "St Andrews, a Village Built on Gold" will be launched. Details of the program are available from 0407 506 523 or [standrews150@gmail.com](mailto:standrews150@gmail.com)

Joy Jobbins who lived in Eltham in the 1950s has written a memoir titled "Shoestring" after her historic Eltham house. Joy will speak about her book at the Eltham Library on 11<sup>th</sup> November. Contact the library for details and bookings.



Birch Cottage 1969 – From a photograph by George Bell

## PRESIDENT'S FINDINGS

By Harry Gilham

As our regular 'working bees' activities uncover items that have been 'put away' in the past, it is interesting to note a 1902 *Evelyn Observer* newspaper item which informed the local inhabitants of the dates and hours of sittings for those Courts of Law in the County of Evelyn – Andersons Creek (Warrandyte) and Queenstown (St Andrews).

## HISTORY IN STAMP COLLECTING

by Diana Bassett-Smith

Recently a grandson had a birthday. When at his school's Grandparents' Day and one of his schoolmates had commented to me that his hobby of stamp collecting had helped with his history and general knowledge questions, it caused me to ponder over the remark and prompted me to give our grandson a stamp album as a present. Consequently, during the last few months we have looked at the history that arrives regularly with our mail.

Stamps! Examples being a Century of Scouting, resulting in a detailed discussion, of one of our sons, his uncle Rob, who had been with Eltham Scouts and attended the world Jamboree at Idaho, USA. He was the youngest scout there by one day. We also remembered the times scouts spent camping on our place at Kangaroo Ground, and one hot Total Fire Ban day our small kitchen was filled with scouts cooking their meals; Anzac Day and the stamp pictured, "A Bugler"; A post card bearing a stamp showing an Elephant; stamps with flowers such as the Green Spider Plant found in Tasmania – so now to the atlas as geography is involved.

The conversation turned – "What is Quarantine?". The school had given our granddaughter's class Coin Collection Folders, the 2008 \$1 dog coin, which invoked the question, followed by "What is EI?" Equine Flu, we discussed its drastic effect on the horse industry and "what if". Such as Foot and Mouth Disease, and EI's ramifications for Australia. Locally EI's effect was on Eltham Pony Club,

COURTS.		1902.	
Courts will be held during the Year 1902, at the undermentioned places, on the days, at the hours, and on the dates hereinafter respectively set out, viz. :-			
Name of Court.	Day.	Hour.	
Heldelberg ...	Monday ...	10 A.M.	5, 20*†
Andersons Creek ...	Monday ...	11	18
Eltham ...	Tuesday ...	11	14
Yarra Glen ...	Wednesday ...	9.30	15
Healesville ...	Thursday ...	10.30 P.M.	30
Illydala ...	Friday ...	9.30 A.M.	3, 10, 17*†
Penitence Gully ...	Tuesday ...	9	24, 31
Queenstown ...	Monday ...	11	21, 28
Warrandyte ...	Saturday ...	10	2, 9
			22
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\* Police Magistrate's visits.  
 † Licensing and Warden's Courts.  
 The Clerk of Courts will attend to issue summonses and other processes as under :-  
 Eltham—Tuesday preceding each Court day.  
 Yarra Glen—Wednesday preceding each Court day.  
 Healesville—Thursday preceding each Court day.  
 Warrandyte—Saturday preceding each Court day.

Kangaroo Ground Pony Club and others in the Shire. Their activities were closed down. Yes, stamps and coins present us with history every day.

Then came the question, when did we first use stamps? So to a look in the encyclopaedia. Yes – 6<sup>th</sup> May 1840, UK 1d Black; 7<sup>th</sup> May first stamp collection began.

Recently there came a Society Newsletter with a pre-stamped envelope showing the Maryborough Post Office. Take note!!



So we have become aware of the history we meet every day. I find myself turning over my change of 20 cent and 50 cent coins to see the history on the obverse side. Sometimes a surprise. Today a New Zealand 20 cent with a Tiki design. More geography and history for discussion. Interesting, fun.

### CONTINUING PAT BADDELEY'S STORY

Over the past year or so and as Newsletter space permits, we have featured excerpts from the reminiscences of Pat Baddeley (nee Nation) about growing up in Eltham through the 1930s and 40s. We continue with Pat's story, starting with her memories of the war years.

The War loomed large in my childish consciousness, more as I grew older and awareness increased. There were the cessation of local social events and growing shortages of all kinds – a common saying was, "Don't you know there's a war on?" if one asked for a rare item, or even a common one! There was the sobering recurrence of bad news received by families and in news broadcasts. But there was plenty of community activity. Evening courses were held in First Aid and Home Nursing, attended by the women, including my mother, while those men unable to serve did Air Raid Warden training. There were even Blackout and Brownout drills for the town. The Red Cross was very active in organizing parcels for Our Boys, and townsfolk were asked to commit to a weekly subscription, however small. My mother's collection round took in Eltham Heights, and she always returned exhausted from her round. It really impressed me that people would continue their commitment of one shilling per week, or whatever it was, over the years.

As early as 1943, a women's Auxiliary was formed to raise funds for a suitable War Memorial, and discussions soon led to an ambitious proposal for a complex of buildings to be regularly used, so that people would constantly be reminded of Eltham's servicemen. But the focus was to be on children – they would enjoy a better world than their parents and than the contemporary youth - the seeds of the baby boomers, already arriving. There were to be a baby health centre, a children's library, and a kindergarten. The history is documented elsewhere. My mother took part from the beginning in the auxiliary's activities, which seemed always 'on the go', and eventually raised two thirds of the funds for the facilities. In 1953 she became a member of the War Memorial Trust, formed in 1945 to formalise the effort and manage the project, soon becoming its treasurer and remaining so at least until 1968. But her greatest effort was with the children's library. Difficult as it is to convey to later generations a relatively carless society, the dearth of reading matter of any sort is also hard to imagine. I vividly remember Mum saying to some ladies in the street, "You can't buy a decent children's book in Melbourne!" and catching an amused glance between them.

However there was a strongly motivated group of women determined to redress this lack, and they obviously succeeded in convincing the community of the need. It seems a wonderful feat in those tense, practical times, and gives a glimpse of the sort of post-war life they envisaged. One of these visionary women was Win Bow – but in those days the ladies all addressed each other as “Mrs” - , wife of artist Ian Bow. She was a tireless worker for the yearly fetes and other money-raising functions held by the Auxiliary. She also ran a Preschool group in the hall of St. Margaret’s Church, where its tennis courts are now, before moving to the High School to teach junior science. She taught my sons and was still there when I arrived. A tiny person with a usually soft voice, she had a brilliant aim with duster or chalk and the occasional, surprising roar! She was famous for her extensive excursions on the geology of parts of Victoria, and reduced at least two senior male teachers to shivering, muddy individuals who refused to attend further such trips. She would produce a ten-page assignment for the children (year 7) to fill in on the bus (I was never able fully to complete it!), and they would be let out of the bus to view various geological features. The sight of over a hundred yelling children flowing/scrambling/running down and up a basalt gorge on Jackson’s Creek, or ditto up to overlook the dramatic drop from Mount Macedon wasn’t for the faint-hearted! A quiet, modest person, she often produced evidence of other interests, including exquisite Chinese objects d’art.

Nevertheless, practicality ruled, and the Children’s Library was the last to be built. But its committee began work immediately after the war, and the library opened in 1952 using one of the rooms in the newly-built Baby Health Centre. This necessitated construction of movable, lockable bookshelves for storing and displaying the books, undertaken by a local carpenter. Library sessions were twice weekly after school hours, when the babies and mothers were not attending, and there was a group of volunteers who manned the library as well as taking part in working bees, especially in the setting-up stages. Books were given by many, and others bought with funds raised in the community: they covered a range of topics and catered for all ages. I recall even a toddlers’ book in French! There were fiction, science, history, geography, craft .... The first secretary was Mrs Pam Sutherland, a young librarian who installed the cataloguing and borrowing systems. After a year or so my mother became secretary and remained so for the history of the library. The committee learned of the disappointment of the children and teachers at Kangaroo Ground School in their remoteness from the library. Soon a set of heavy, locking wooden boxes was constructed and filled with books selected for loan to the school, and several schools in the Shire participated in this scheme for many years, using buses until cars became more common and parents and teachers were able to visit in person. Selection of new books and repair of familiar, popular ones were constant tasks.

In the early fifties, sadly, division occurred in the town, the mostly conservative population expressing fear that ‘the Communists’ would take over local bodies. Also, already, new people were moving in, houses were being built, and the newcomers wanted a role in the community. It’s difficult now to recall the heated debates and fears of that time of the Korean War, and the McCarthy period.

When the Library was built there was much joy that a reading corner could be provided, precious books displayed and all books properly set out. The design allowed for the main service area to function as a community meeting hall out of hours, and it was well used as such, even after the building became a dental clinic. In 1967 the Eltham branch library was opened when it joined Heidelberg Regional Library, and the Children’s Library amalgamated with the branch library. Mum was happy to see the change as opening local children to a

wider choice of reading in an environment which encouraged lifetime continuation of reading, and access to information broadening horizons. An avid reader, she had always felt deprived of education, as had my father. He had been offered a scholarship to a London secondary school, but his parents did not pursue it; Mum told me that as a child, whenever she found a cast horseshoe, she would spit on it, throw it over her left shoulder and wish, "I hope I may go to college". But as the eldest of four fatherless children, she was needed to assist her mother, postmistress in Lake Boga. She learned the postal procedures, and was taught by the local Stationmaster the morse code. In her late teens and early twenties, she became one of the very few female postal telegraphists in Victoria, sending and receiving telegrams, which were written out, then delivered by cycling messenger boys.

My brother and I both wondered if the huge change in her life with the transfer of the Children's Library would be distressing to our mother. But she was also by this time in the workforce, and there were the grandchildren! Back in 1942 she had learned of the shortage of postal telegraphists, most being away in the services, and she worked full time for a year or so at Clifton Hill Post Office, thereafter relieving on pension and child endowment days until 1957 at Abbotsford (Government allowances were paid at post offices in cash). From then until 1967 she was a relieving telegraphist, when morse code technology was superseded. After that she worked as a postal clerk at several suburban offices for two more years, entailing a long train journey daily. This was, of course, concurrent with her work on the War Memorial Trust and the Library. Another wartime task she had undertaken was tutoring young airmen in morse code!

In 1972, aged 72, she suddenly tired of living on her own, our father having died in 1956, and moved to the Judge Book Village, where she led an active life, including running the Village's library, extending its stock and organizing a collection of large print books. Also in 1972, she was one of only 100 people presented with medallions commemorating the Shire of Eltham's centenary, and their contribution to the Shire. Mum died at the village in 1995.

### **ANDREW ROSS MUSEUM**

This month the Museum was again surveyed by a Museums Australia accreditation team. The Andrew Ross Museum accreditation sub-committee had been working hard to check that our t's are crossed and i's dotted, as the surveyors are very conscientious in their review. Everyone is hopeful of another positive outcome. We have been Accredited for some years now. Museums Australia has strict criteria and high standards.

John Austin, our President, has developed a new flyer to promote the Museum. What one can do on site with computers and colour printers.

The Spring issue of the "Kangaroo Ground Chronicle" is now available. It is posted to Andrew Ross Museum members. Russell has an EDHS copy for perusal. Production of the Chronicle costs at least a dollar per copy so if you wish to receive regular copies, please consider membership of the Andrew Ross Museum. Membership forms will be available at our meetings. Yes, you may read history of the district, even contribute to this interesting seasonal publication of the Andrew Ross Museum. Come and explore our files, view our display, you may find or be able to add a long lost relative's name or provide a missing link about a house, road, shop or sporting activity.

## OTHER NEWS

For some years now Nillumbik Council has provided an annual heritage grant to all historical societies and similar groups in the Shire. We have recently received from the Council the 2008-9 heritage grant funds of \$500. This money will assist in defraying the costs of operating our Local History Centre. We are grateful to the Council for this important support for our Society.

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Our Society is represented on the management committee for the Eltham Justice Precinct which includes our Local History Centre and the adjoining Court House. The functions of this committee have included arranging the recent removal of the large tree between the two buildings. This was considered necessary to prevent damage to these historic buildings. The committee is currently examining a project to provide information signs for the precinct.

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A small group of members continues to make progress with organising our collection of local records at our regular workshops. Work can be tailored to suit the interests of individual members. For example, Sue Law is currently working on filing photos and other information on mud brick houses and other interesting local houses. Sue is in contact with local estate agents to promote their interest in houses of heritage significance. As a result, members of the Barry Plant team have recently visited our Local History Centre.

Coming workshop dates are:-

Mondays 9.30am

Tuesday 7.30pm

15<sup>th</sup> September and 20<sup>th</sup> October

7<sup>th</sup> October

Check our website for details of our program for the remainder of this year:  
<http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/edhs/web/HomePage.html>

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Our free heritage walks for the public and members continue on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> September. This will be the southern walk including the Eltham Cemetery, Lavender Park Road and Wingrove Park. It starts at 2pm at the Local History Centre. Ring Russell on 9439 9717 for information or email to [edhs@bigpond.com](mailto:edhs@bigpond.com).

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