

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. 183 NOVEMBER 2008

NEXT MEETING

ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZENS' CENTRE

LIBRARY PLACE, ELTHAM

(FORMERLY OLD SHIRE OFFICE DRIVEWAY)

8-00 PM WEDNESDAY 12TH NOVEMBER

PANEL PRESENTATION

**"THE CENTENARY OF WOMEN'S
SUFFRAGE IN VICTORIA"**

CHRISTMAS FUNCTION

6.30 PM WEDNESDAY 10TH DECEMBER

OLD ELTHAM COURTHOUSE

730 MAIN ROAD



John Street "Mud Brick Precinct"
See November Heritage Walk Page 5
From a sketch by Peter Glass

HERITAGE WALKS PROGRAM

**2.00 PM SATURDAY
1ST NOVEMBER**

**ELTHAM LOCAL HISTORY
CENTRE**

BOOKINGS 9439 9717

NOVEMBER MEETING

The right of women to vote in elections is today taken for granted. However, in the late nineteenth century and even into the twentieth century there was significant opposition to granting this right even from some women. In 1891 30,000 Victorian women signed a petition to the Victorian Government requesting a right to vote. Women were granted the right to vote in Federal elections in 1902 but it was not until 1908 that a similar provision was made for Victorian state elections. To mark the centenary of this event we have arranged for a panel of speakers to deal with various aspects of the subject at our November meeting. In addition, there will be a short DVD presentation, Victorian Women Vote 1908-2008, prepared by the Office of Women's Policy.

The speakers will be:-

- Mandy Press from the Nillumbik Women's Network
- Anne Paul from Victorian Women's Trust who has done significant research on the historical aspects of the subject
- Jean Verso of Nillumbik Historical Society who has been researching the Diamond Creek women who signed the 1891 petition.

Join us for this interesting and lively discussion and afterwards for our usual excellent supper. Visitors are most welcome.

CHRISTMAS FUNCTION

The format will be the same as for the last few years. We will be using the Local History Centre as well as the adjoining Courthouse commencing at 6.30pm. There is no formal agenda item but Jim Connor has agreed to again provide a background screening of computer images of local historical photos and pictures from his own collection. The Local History Centre collection will be available for browsing. For convenience we may bring some of the displays into the Courthouse.

The Society will supply meat and cheese platters and desserts. Members are asked to bring a salad to share and any other items, such as nibbles, that they would like to contribute. Ring Sue on 9439 9520 if in doubt about what to bring. Wine and soft drink will be available and, of course, there will be coffee and tea. Bring along any other types of drinks that you think you will need. Limited parking is available in the back yard of the Local History Centre. There is plenty of parking on the wide verge on the west side of Main Road but there are some issues in getting across the traffic at this time of day. Otherwise, you can park in Brougham Street.

VALE – BOB (ROBERT) BRUCE

by Jim Connor

Many people were sad to hear that Bob Bruce passed away on Thursday 18 September 2008. Bob was a valued member of the Eltham District Historical Society for many years and regularly attended our meetings and functions. His depth of knowledge and passion for history, especially of our local area, was often highlighted by a comment or question on a particular topic under discussion.

Bob was a great character, a man of many ideas and interests, forthright in his opinions while compassionate in his thoughts and actions, especially for others in his community. He loved to laugh, liked to stir the pot a little and really enjoyed connecting with people. As a regular contributor to the letters columns of local newspapers he was a critic when he saw injustice on a social issue, made suggestions where considered appropriate or had words of praise for a job well done.

He was an inaugural member of the Shire of Eltham's Disability Advisory Committee and was a member of the Shire of Nillumbik's Disability Advisory Committee from establishment (approx. 1995) and has featured in various Council publications promoting Access and Inclusion. Bob actively pushed his idea of establishing locations within local businesses and community facilities where people could recharge the batteries of their electric scooters or wheelchairs. His initiative has resulted in the Shire of Nillumbik developing the "Recharge" scheme, which has now been taken up by over 40 municipalities across Victoria.

Bob will be sadly missed by many people in our broader community and especially by members of the Eltham District Historical Society. Our thoughts and best wishes go to Shirley, his wife and members of his family, whom he loved dearly.

CONCLUDING PAT BADDELEY'S STORY

In recent Newsletters we have followed the reminiscences of Pat Baddeley (nee Nation) who grew up in Eltham in the 1930s and 40s. We conclude Pat's story with her memories from the post-war years.

My Eltham story from 1945.

Though my father was ill, there had been no question that I would go to a city high school. (The closest senior secondary schools were Coburg and Northcote, difficult to access via public transport). This was made easier through the Field labour government's education allowance (or was Mr Field the education minister in John Cain senior's government?), but I didn't for many years appreciate the sacrifice of our parents, or how unusual they were. After Matriculation, I became a Student Teacher in the Education Department at Montmorency. The old training system placed students in a school on probation, giving them on-the-job training before they entered the Training College for the year's course at age eighteen. The school had a similar double room to Eltham's, but its folding doors were usually closed, with grades 5 and 6 on one side and the Infant Room on the other. Grades 3 and 4 were held the other side of Rattray Road in the timber hall, soon to be known as the RSL Hall, where from age 11 to 13 I had attended Girl Guide meetings under Jean Baddeley (now Mrs Jock Ryan of Diamond Creek), a secondary Art-craft teacher. Monty then was tiny – Willetts' butchers near the station, Musselwhites' general store, newsagency and PO up a bit on the right, and about half way up on the left, a bakery. There was the station house near the railway, home for many years to the Rosewall family, famous for the immaculate condition of the station and its beautiful garden, of which a couple of trees still remain. The school's use of the hall showed that the expansion in school/local population was underway already in 1948. Before the building boom there were many tragic stories of families under accommodation pressure, living in cramped or shared premises and suffering acute stress. The school had a dedicated staff – gruff, kindly J J Murphy as head and gentle Isla Goodwin as Infant Mistress. My eighteenth birthday not being until June of the second year, I was then given a fortnight's rural school training and sent to Redbank for the rest of the year. On my return, I completed my College year (1950) and taught for two years at Melton Primary School, then a tiny place in the Western Highway with a two-teacher school. I was fascinated to meet people who had connections with people I knew, as I had been at Redbank. I returned each weekend, and married Arthur in February 1953, moving to Montmorency where I have lived ever since. (We built a house on the edge of a large paddock, previously owned by Mrs Nicholson, where I had been to several Guide rallies organised by Jean, Arthur's sister. I still remember its magnificent trees and two dams and have lots of its greenhoods growing in pots.)

While rearing our three sons, who attended St Faith's Kinder and Briar Hill School, I worked as an occasional emergency teacher in the area, also being involved in the Briar Hill Mothers' Club, for a couple of years as secretary, where I also did the school bank (the children's accounts). I also became involved in the Aborigines' Advancement League, run by Doug, later Sir Douglas, Nicholls and Gordon Bryant, both of whom I admired enormously. Gordon had taught at the HES/High School in the late forties and early fifties and later became a Member of Parliament, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in the Whitlam government. The birth of our fourth son, David, with disabilities meant a withdrawal to care for him, and his death in 1966 was a severe blow. To focus my mind, I undertook correspondence studies, eventually completing an Arts degree at LaTrobe University and joining the staff at Eltham High in 1974. Adrian, our eldest son, had entered the school in 1967 and Vivian and Robert followed in 1970 and 1973; I also worked with the Mothers' Club in Adrian's early years there.

I taught English and History/Social Studies at the High School, instigated a course in Aboriginal Studies, and became Student Welfare Co-ordinator in my last four years there. I also completed an Education degree in language and counselling. The school was a vibrant place to work in, with an enthusiastic, active staff. Many changes occurred in the buildings, and we endured several fires, the worst taking a whole wing, including all the resources of the English department. (I'm sure this is documented elsewhere.) The school and its grounds looked so unloved afterwards, that a recent ex-student, Leigh Wykes, who was a landscape architect even while a student, got a team together, dug up the lumpy asphalt with picks, and constructed a lovely garden court, whose trees are now maturing. I left the school in early 1986. In the early eighties, I was a member of a Steering Committee set up to draw up guidelines for the continuation of the Eltham Community Health Centre under new Government rules. This connection was renewed in the early nineties when I became a member of the Health Centre's Committee of Management, via my connection with Eltham Foodshare, for several years until the membership rules were altered to exclude those without profession expertise in health or accounting. Soon after this, Montmorency became part of the area excised from the local shire, which precluded my continuing as a member of the Health Centre. I had become involved in the setting up of Eltham Foodshare under Judy Wadham in late 1991, and was secretary from 1992 to 1997, including concurrently a period as president of about ten months. Under Judy's inspired leadership, Foodshare was widely supported in the community, especially by Rotary and local schools, enabling us to provide nutritionally well-balanced parcels to people referred by the Health Centre and other local welfare agencies. Judy received a Medal of the Order of Australia for her work in Foodshare and other local groups. Initially, St Margaret's Church generously allowed us to use the old vicarage for a base, and we were a nuisance to them for several years. We were able to move to the old Maternal and Child Health centre when the service became part of the Community Health Centre, thus for me and Lesly Martin (widow of artist Alan Martin), a Foodshare Committee member who had been a member of the Children's Library Committee, completing the circle/

NILLUMBIK NOW AND THEN

As a journalist with the former *Diamond Valley News*, Marguerite Marshall wrote a series of articles on local places of historic interest, later published as the small book "Eltham Shire – Historic Buildings and Places". Many years later an expanded version was published under the title "Nillumbik Now and Then".

Now Marguerite has produced a much larger version of "Nillumbik Now and Then", including significant rewriting and many additional articles.

The new publication has been made possible by financial support from the Victorian Public Records Office, Bendigo Bank and Nillumbik Shire Council. Our Society and other historical societies in Nillumbik have assisted with content for many of the stories.

The book is to be launched at the Eltham Library on Wednesday 19th November at 7pm. Refreshments will be provided R.S.V.P. and enquiries to the library on 9439 9266.

PRESIDENT'S FINDINGS

by Harry Gilham

For those who have yet to hear, it is confirmed that between 1852 and 1931 Eltham supported two hotels. The Eltham Hotel has undergone numerous 'rebuids', but is still on its site and is still called the Eltham Hotel.

Opposite, in the 1852 period, a second Hotel was built – across Maria Street (Main Road). This hotel was built in prefabricated sections of timber and was a product made in Singapore, thus the cedar wood frames, doors, floors, walls, windows, etc., making up the fourteen room building, were seen to be from a 'foreign forest' and not native hardwood. Also, as you see in the photo, the south end was of two storeys and was known as the ball-room for social and community events. Gatherings of note were in 1856 when the local Road Board held its first election of members;

1860 saw the inaugural meeting of the Eltham Church Committee which later built St. Margaret's Church of England in Pitt Street.

Also in the 1860s the Cobb and Co Coaches made the hotel a stopping place on their way to and from the Woods Point goldfields.

Its name was firstly The Fountain Hotel, then in 1883 Evelyn Hotel until 1919 when it was de-licensed to become a rooming house.

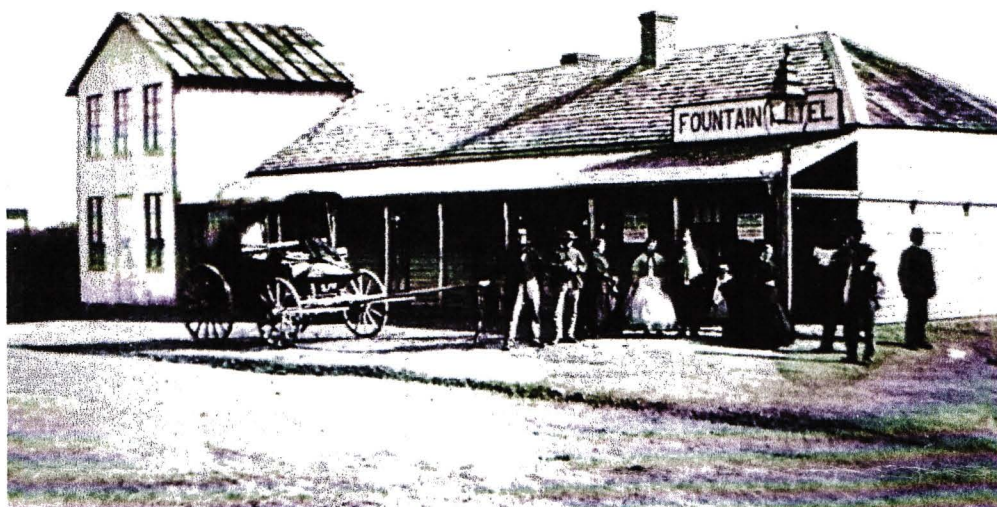
On February 8th 1931 at 3.44pm on a hot north windy day, the building and stable were destroyed by fire.

In 1910 the 'ballroom' end of the building was severely burnt out and the repairs replaced the two storeys with one storey.

History of the early 1850s shows that Melbourne saw not only timber prefabricated buildings but portable iron houses which arrived in wooden crates from England. Corrugated iron had become part of replacing roofs and could be used as external walls. The crates in which the house parts were carried became the lining of the ceiling and walls.

The newspaper sale items read like furniture sales except that libraries, town halls, ball-rooms, public halls and church buildings were also available in kit form and all you needed were people who could bolt everything supplied, together with the spanners enclosed in the kit.

The hotel cum rooming house building lasted for eighty years. The vacant site has become an overflow car park. Perhaps a mounted image of what was there will be a suitable reminder that this area was the centre of 'Little Eltham'.



NOVEMBER HERITAGE WALK

Usually our Saturday heritage walks alternate between the "north walk" and the "south walk". From time to time we include something different and so for the walk on 1st November we will visit the John Street 'mud brick precinct'. It will also include part of the north walk.

The walk is open to the public and Society members are encouraged to come along also. It starts at 2pm at the Local History Centre and will take about two hours. It will move along at a gentle pace with as much stopping and talking as walking. Refreshments will be available at the finish of the walk. Ring Russell on 9439 9717 for bookings or email to edhs@bigpond.com.

ANDREW ROSS MUSEUM

by Diana Bassett-Smith

Accreditation is behind us and planning for the future continues.

This Old House Exhibition is drawing to a close so if you have not seen this splendid story of a segment of the Shire's history, pop up to the museum for a lingering look, a cuppa with one of our

stalwart volunteers and to hear about our link to the activities at the Kangaroo Ground Memorial Tower.

Don and Joan Brown are leading the team in developing our next special exhibition, the Stevensons of Kangaroo Ground. But like any history, once one starts to delve into it the ramifications spread near and far. For Keith Banks, a link to the lighthouses around the world, as Robert Stevenson, a cousin, was the engineer who developed the flashing light to warn seafarers. For me, a link to Robert Louis Stevenson, on both sides of my family – so making his books all the more interesting. Yes, history is thought provoking, leads to new friendships and activities not previously contemplated.

Come, visit the Museum, even become a member – you never know who you might meet there. Even as I did recently as Don Brown called out, "Di, you have a cousin here", neither of us knew of each other, it was a chance visit.

The Andrew Ross Museum, Kangaroo Ground is open Thursdays 10am – 12noon and Sundays 2pm to 4pm (closed school holidays) or by appointment – phone Diana 9712 0668.

OTHER COMING EVENTS

The Yarra Plenty Regional Library has nominated November as Local History Month and each branch has scheduled a number of talks and other events throughout the month. Of special interest is the talk by Joy Jobbins at the Eltham Library on Tuesday 11th November at 7pm. Joy will talk on "The Rural Bohemia of Eltham" which will cover life in 1950s Eltham and the advertising industry. Copies of her book "Shoestring" will be available for purchase.

Other events at the Eltham Library are:

"Haunted Eltham"	10.30am	Friday	7 th November
"Producing a Book from Start to Finish"	7.00pm	Thursday	13 th November

Bookings are required for all events. Phone Eltham Library on 9439 9266. Check the Library brochure for events at other libraries.

The 150th Birthday of St Andrews will be celebrated on the weekend of 29th and 30th 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.

OTHER NEWS

We have been contacted by Andrew Morrison, grandson of Sir William Irvine, the prominent parliamentarian and judge who lived at "Killeavy" in Eltham. He has advised that family papers, including those of Sir William, have been deposited at the State Library. These papers might form an interesting research project for anyone interested in the life and times of Sir William Irvine.

Sharon Okey from Western Australia has donated to the Society the diaries of her late great uncle Jim Shortte. The diaries cover the years 1971-72 when Jim was Superintendent of Works with Eltham Shire Council. Jim and his wife Avalon lived at Research and are both now buried at the Eltham Cemetery.

The next records workshop will be at 9.30am Monday 17th November. Members are encouraged to come along and assist with filing and other tasks. At committee meeting will be held at 730pm Tuesday 2nd December. The main item of business will be our program for 2009. Please contact a committee member if you have ideas for next year's meetings.

Harry Gilham
President

Russell Yeoman
Secretary

David Johns
Treasurer /
Membership Secretary
Phone – 9434 3357

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