



ELTHAM DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Incorporated

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NEWSLETTER

NO. 193 JULY 2010

NEXT MEETING

8-00 PM WEDNESDAY 14th JULY

**JO McCORMICK AND "BELLE VUE"
PRESENTED BY SUE LAW & RUSSELL YEOMAN**

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

HERITAGE WALKS & EXCURSIONS PROGRAM

**2PM SATURDAY 3rd JULY
EDENDALE WALK**

**2PM SATURDAY
4th SEPTEMBER
HERITAGE WALK**



Belle Vue, Eltham

From Jo McCormick's photo album

JULY MEETING

The topic for this meeting is Jo McCormick and her house "Belle Vue" in Livingstone Road, Eltham.

Jo was a valued member of our Committee and dear friend of many of our members until her death in 2009. "Belle Vue" is the farmhouse of a property that is now a significant part of suburban Eltham, just a short distance north of the town centre.

This will be a joint presentation by Sue Law and Russell Yeoman with digital slides presented by Jim Connor. Sue will talk about her memories of Jo, her life in Eltham and her very interesting earlier life. Russell will cover the history of "Belle Vue Farm" from its original purchase by pioneer Eltham farmer Henry Stooke to the present day where the old farmhouse sits within an extensive suburban residential area.

The history of the property is largely based on a heritage assessment prepared by consultant Lorraine Huddle for Nillumbik Shire Council. Additional information has been obtained from our Society records.

This presentation is intended as our Society tribute to Jo McCormick but will also cover important aspects of the early history of Eltham.

EDENDALE WALK

Our heritage walk on 3rd July will visit Edendale Farm and nearby areas of interest. It will start from the Edendale car park in Gastons Road at 2pm and will take about two hours. Gastons Road runs off Wattletree Road between the Eltham North bridge and the railway crossing (Melway ref. 22 A2)

Edendale Farm now operates as Nillumbik Council's environmental centre. The historic farmhouse has undergone recent restoration works. A brief history of this property was included in the last Newsletter. The house and gateway sculpture "The Fences Act" are included in the Heritage Overlay in the Nillumbik Planning Scheme.

The walk will pass through the farm property and radiate to a number of other points of interest, including mud brick houses, the Eltham home of author Alan Marshall and Colemans Corner where the early road system has undergone some unusual changes. It will also traverse the north western corner of "Belle Vue Farm", the subject of our July meeting.

There is no charge for this walk which is open to Society members and the general public. The distance is about 3.5 km and it will take about 2 hours, Contact Russell for further information on 0409 021 063 including on the day contact.

LOCAL ROAD AND STREET NAMES

by Russell Yeoman

At the Society's records workshop on 1st June a small group of members made a start on a project of recording the origin of road and street names of the Eltham district. This was mostly a "brainstorming" session with a little research of Society records along the way and it certainly provided for lively discussion. The result of this effort was a collection of notes covering the origin of a number of local names but this is a small proportion of the streets and roads of our area. The notes are being coordinated by Alison Delaney. This is



Main Road, Research

intended as an on-going project with further workshops on the subject intended. As well we are seeking written contributions from members and others with information on how local street names originated. This may include documented evidence or even unconfirmed information as a starting point for investigation. Perhaps you could research the origin of the name of the street where you live. (For the purpose of this article the terms road and street are generally interchangeable.)

The origin of road names is not always clear-cut. In Eltham, and generally in Victoria, the first roads were established as part of the survey and sale of Crown land and were known as Government roads. This was a description of a type of road rather than a name and usually they were not initially named.

The earliest roads in our area followed the boundaries of the mile square rectangular subdivision and because of the topography many contained extremely steep grades. They were not constructed as part of the early land sales.

In the 1850s the need for practical and legal access became apparent and the Government acquired roads through land that already had been sold and created new Government roads on more practical alignments. Later new records were acquired by the local authority, this creating a further category of road.

Names for these types of roads often came about by popular usage. Sometimes the name was formalised by Council declaration. In other cases the common name just came to be accepted as the official name.

As privately owned land was subdivided new streets were created, legally private streets but eventually becoming public roads. For many years now, plans of subdivision would show the names of new streets although many older subdivisions would simply identify them as "road". Often the names of subdivisional streets are selected by the subdivider, perhaps family names or descriptive names, such as Hillcrest Road. New names could be dictated by Council policy. For example, in the 1980s Eltham Council adopted a policy that new names should be of Aboriginal origin.

This project presents opportunities for occasional articles in the Newsletter and for this first article we will look at some of the names considered at the workshop and some others of interest.

It is appropriate to start with Main Road as the most identifiable road in the district and with considerable interest in its establishment and name. In its earliest days it was the main road through the area but by common usage it is now known by the name Main Road. In road authority parlance it is also known as Eltham-Yarra Glen Road.

Main Road starts at the Plenty River, Lower Plenty, the western boundary of the former Shire of Eltham. It continues through Lower Plenty, Montmorency South, Eltham and Research to the boundary of Kangaroo Ground at Bells Hill Road. Beyond this point its name is Eltham-Yarra Glen Road. West of the Plenty River the main road is named Lower Plenty Road.

Main Road has its origin in a proclamation in 1840 under the Parish Roads Act of a road "between the" Suburban Allotments in the Parish of Jika Jika (North Fitzroy and the Village Reserve in the Parish of Nillumbik (Eltham)). In many places the alignment of the road followed the dray track to Yarra Flats established by the Ryrie brothers more than ten years earlier.

From the Plenty River the road passed through the land that had been recently purchased by Benjamin Baxter. It followed the line of today's Main Road and Old Eltham Road and ended at today's Bolton Street.



Main Road, Nearing Eltham

In 1869 the Eltham District Road Board opened a new road from Lower Plenty to Bolton Street bypassing Old Eltham Road. That is today's Main Road.

In 1850 there was a track along the Old Eltham Road route and it continued on towards Kangaroo Ground through the proposed Government township of Eltham and unsold crown land, roughly following the line of Main Road. Holloway's 1851 Little Eltham subdivision north of the township reserve made no provision for a through road although between Dalton Street and York Street, Maria Street generally followed the line of the track to Kangaroo Ground. Soon after the land was subdivided the Government established a road along the line of the track that involved acquisition of parts of Holloway's subdivision and creation of a Government road through the township reserve and northerly from Holloway's land. This completed the formal road link to Kangaroo Ground. Together with the new road of 1869 the whole length of today's Main Road came into being. However, it would be many years before the road proclaimed in the 1850s provided convenient all weather access.

This road or parts of it have been known by various names over the years. In particular, Maria Street through Little Eltham has an important historical context. A c1920 land sale plan from Lower Plenty shows it as Eltham Road. Further support for this name is provided by the Walter Withers painting "On the Eltham Road 1906". However, a 1920s Council plan shows the full length from Lower Plenty to Research as Main Road so that appears to be the official name from at least that period.

Main Road still follows the alignment set by its early history except for several minor deviations, notably between Dalton and Brougham Streets and at Colemans Corner just past Wattletree Road. Here its original alignment is now Coolabah Drive and Coleman Crescent. At Lower Plenty the old bridge over the Plenty River has been by-passed and now remains a distance to the south of the current alignment. Over much of its length the road reserve has been widened to accommodate dual carriageways by acquisition of private property. Dual carriageways have been constructed from Lower Plenty to Eltham South and through central Eltham.

The name of this road, although perhaps unimaginative is a functional name that indicates its obvious role.

In this article we can deal briefly with a few other names. It is appropriate to choose names mentioned in the Main Road history or having an association with Main Road. Some names are best dealt with as a group, for example those of the Little Eltham subdivision (previously dealt with at our November 2009 meeting) and we will keep that for a future Newsletter.

The origin of the name OLD ELTHAM ROAD, Lower Plenty, is obvious from the history of Main Road. It is shown on the c1920 Lower Plenty land sale plan as Government Road and at the top of the hill near Bonds Road it is shown as Sand Hill Road. This is presumably because of the sand pit near that location. The date of adoption of its current name is unknown.

BELLS HILL ROAD at the eastern end of Main Road, Research was once part of Mt Pleasant Road. It was re-named by the Council in the 1990s because it was separated from the main part of that road. Bells Hill is the hill in Main Road rising up from Research to Kangaroo Ground. John Bell of the pioneer Bell family of Kangaroo Ground and Yarra Glen, lived at "Violet Bank" the first of the Kangaroo Ground properties at the top of the hill.

FITZSIMONS LANE (pronounced as in the male first name Simon) is now a main access route to Eltham from Melbourne as an alternative to Main Road. This four lane main road

is rather inappropriately designated as a lane. It joins Main Road at the Eltham South roundabout.

Fitzsimons Lane originally ran north from Templestowe to the Yarra River and was named for the owners of one of the farm properties. In 1963 a bridge was constructed across the Yarra River by the Country Roads Board, the road was widened and land was acquired to link the bridge to Main Road. This new road was originally Eltham-Templestowe Road but in the 1980s Eltham Council officially named it Fitzsimons Lane because it was continuous with that road on the south side of the river.

THE CHRISTMAS HILLS STORY

Mick Woiwod has been a member of our Society for many years but is better known as one of the driving forces behind the establishment of the Andrew Ross Museum at Kangaroo Ground. He is also a prominent member of the Nillumbik Reconciliation Group and a prolific author on the history of Kangaroo Ground and nearby areas. Mick's latest book is "The Christmas Hills Story" or "Once Around the Sugarloaf II". Mick will speak about this new book at a number of local functions including:

Sunday 11th July 2pm at the old classroom, Kangaroo Ground School;

Sunday 18th July 2 pm at the Eltham Library Community Gallery

Bookings are essential for the 18th July, phone 9439 8700

MORE NEWS

Subscriptions for 2010 – 11 are due on 1st July but many members have paid already. Details of current subscriptions were given in the last Newsletter. Payment can be made to David at the July meeting or sent to the Society's post office box.

Ross McDonald of Research has produced a well presented booklet titled "From Lagan to Arthurs Creek -The McDonald Family history and connections with the Draper Family, Charnwood". It was prepared for the McDonald and Draper families get together at Arthurs Creek in April. The families also have connections with Kangaroo Ground and Eltham. Ross has presented a copy of the booklet to the Society and we thank him very much for the donation. Ross has offered to talk to the Society on some of the wider historical aspects covered in his work and this will probably be included in our 2011 program.

Small numbers of members continue to carry out valuable work at our regular records workshops. If you would like to assist but cannot come on the specified dates then individual arrangements can be made for appropriate tasks and dates. Talk to a Committee member if you are interested. Coming dates for our scheduled workshops are:

Tuesdays 7.30 pm 6th July 3rd August
Mondays 9.30 am 19th July 12th August

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