



ELTHAM DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Incorporated

No. A0016285F

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NEWSLETTER NO. 195 NOVEMBER 2010

NEXT MEETING

8-00 PM WEDNESDAY 10th NOVEMBER

SPEAKER MIKE RIDLEY

"MONTSALVAT - THE PLACE AND THE PEOPLE"

ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZENS' CENTRE

LIBRARY PLACE ELTHAM

(FORMERLY OLD SHIRE OFFICE DRIVEWAY)

CHRISTMAS FUNCTION

6.30 PM WEDNESDAY 8th DECEMBER

OLD ELTHAM COURTHOUSE 730 MAIN ROAD

HERITAGE WALKS & EXCURSIONS PROGRAM

**2PM SATURDAY
6th NOVEMBER
TOM ORR'S FARM**

**2PM SUNDAY
14th NOVEMBER
ELTHAM CEMETERY VISIT**



The Great Hall Montsalvat

NOVEMBER MEETING

Since it was established in the 1930s by Justus Jorgensen, Montsalvat has played a major role in fashioning Eltham into the place we know today. It is far more than a unique collection of buildings, although these buildings were really the start of the tradition of mud brick and other vernacular styles of building that is now widely identified with Eltham.

Many of the people associated with Montsalvat have played a significant role in Eltham's more recent history. These people and Montsalvat the place are an important component of Eltham's artistic reputation.

As a Society we have discussed Montsalvat several times in the past although not for some years. It is well worth retelling the story as seen through different eyes.

Mike Ridley is a volunteer tour guide at Montsalvat and has accumulated a wealth of knowledge about the place and its people. He is also a tour guide at the ABC Melbourne Studios where he previously worked in television. Other places in his tour guide repertoire are the Melbourne Cemetery and Gulf Station at Yarra Glen.

Mike has his own collections of photos of Montsalvat and these will be shown to illustrate his talk by courtesy of Jim Connor and his digital projector.

Participants in this meeting can be assured of an entertaining and informative evening. As at all meetings we welcome interested visitors and new members.



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 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.

NOVEMBER HERITAGE WALK – TOM ORR’S FARM

This article gives details of our next Heritage Walk and also continues our series on local road names.

The Panorama Heights Estate in Montmorency South is a residential area of winding streets lined with indigenous local trees and includes many secluded parks and walkways. Prior to its subdivision in the 1920s this was Tom Orr’s farm, a favourite painting place of Walter Withers. After it was subdivided by land developer John Quinn the sale of land and house building proceeded very slowly and much vacant land remained in the 1970s.

The walk on Saturday 6th November will not be one of historic buildings and the like. Rather it will be a pleasant walk through informal streets and parks, imagining the past landscape that inspired Walter Withers and looking at aspects of this unusual 1920s subdivision. The distance will be about 4km and includes a couple of steep hills. The walk will start at 2.00 pm at the car park in Grand Boulevard opposite the Montmorency South School (Melway Ref. 21E 7/8). The phone number for contact on the day is 0409 021 063.

The Panorama Heights Estate was unusual for its time, although to some extent it emulates the subdivision designs of Walter Burley Griffin such as the heritage listed Glenard Estate at Heidelberg. It includes winding streets, irregularly shaped lots, secluded parks at the rear of lots and connecting walkways. Its main street Grand Boulevard, originally Bonnevue Boulevard, has a very wide road reserve. It connects Main Road, Lower Plenty with Bolton Street Eltham and appears to be designed as an alternative route to Eltham from Lower Plenty. In the centre of the estate was a large shop site subdivision with Bonnevue Boulevard widened out to provide room for parking. This area now contains a small group of shops and an office complex. However, some shop lots have been combined as residential sites and many have been incorporated into the school site.

The estate is bounded on the south by Main Road and on the east by Bolton Street and is shown highlighted on the map, which also shows all current street names. The original street names were allocated by the developer and the reason why most were chosen is unknown. Many are family names but Bonnevue Boulevard and Buena Vista Drive are descriptive of their ridge location. Eltham Council adopted the Grand Boulevard name in about 1960 but the reason for the change is unknown.

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Some other original names have been changed. Hogan Avenue has been changed to Kirwana Grove to avoid confusion with Hoban Avenue, Montmorency. In the 1950s adjoining land was subdivided creating Olympic Avenue, presumably to commemorate the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. This street lined up with a short section of Belmont Crescent in the Panorama Heights Estate so that short section was renamed Olympic Avenue. The northern section of Napier Crescent is separated from the southern section by Pecks Dam although the road reserve continued through the dam. This former farm dam has been named for Hal and Joy Peck whose house adjoined it. To distinguish the northern and southern sections the northern section has been named Pedersen Way after local resident Margo Pedersen, a well known wildlife artist and wildlife carer.

In the late 1970s the Council was considering construction of streets in the estate. There was still much vacant land owned by Quinn family interests. A restructuring plan was adopted, resulting in closures of through streets, creation of some new access streets and opening up of park reserves to streets. Of the new streets Orr Lane commemorates the earlier land owner, Quinn Way, the land developer and Riverina Road Quinn's land development company. In association with the construction of the Ambulance Station, at the intersection of Grand Boulevard and Looker Road, Council created a new street. It was named Apex Way to recognise the role of the local Apex Club in the establishment of the Ambulance Station.

Former Society Treasurer Opal Smith has lived on and adjacent to this estate for many years. She has provided copy of the original estate plan, which will be a useful reference for our walk.

ELTHAM CEMETERY VISIT

The historic Eltham Cemetery is currently celebrating its 150th Anniversary. Harry Gilham's research on the cemetery includes information on Eltham pioneers from those early years, as well as details of interesting and important locals buried there in more recent times.

Harry will lead a further tour of grave sites on Sunday 14th November. It will include many sites not visited on previous cemetery visits.

The tour will start at 2.00 pm. Enter the cemetery from Mt Pleasant Road (Melway Ref. 21 K9) and proceed to the car park near the south western corner.



RECENT ACTIVITIES

Over the past few months there has been a busy round of activities involving committee members and some other members. Jim Connor, with help from Alison Delaney and some others, has been involved in re-arranging the rooms at our Local History Centre to accommodate a number of donated furniture items. These are mainly storage shelves and similar items and they have significantly increased the capacity for orderly storage of our records.

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Work is currently underway on refurbishment and extension of the former residence at the Eltham Primary School. This 1891 building has been assessed in the Nillumbik Heritage Study as being of local heritage significance. The works are part of the Federal Government's Economic Stimulus Package. Our Society had some concerns about the extent of alterations to the rear of the building. The matter was taken up by Jim Connor with assistance from the Eltham Gateway Action Group. As a result of intervention by local Parliamentarians and the goodwill of the school community, a much better outcome has been achieved.

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Gwen Orford has been busy with a number of projects. They include producing typed copies of interviews and discussions from the Society's collection of audio tapes. These involve recollections of Jock Read, Peter Bassett-Smith, Doug Orford and others. Gwen has also been working on albums of records of the 2009 bushfires. Gwen's work has produced some important additions to our Society records.

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Over the past twenty or so years, the former Fabbro Farm in Falkiner Street has been significantly reduced in size by acquisition for parkland and residential development. The last part of the farm in Bell Street came on the market following the death of Maurie Fabbro last year. It has now been purchased by the State Government as open space, although the exact future use is yet to be determined. Robyn Crichton has maintained an interest in the Fabbro family and their land over some years. She is currently liaising with local member, Steve Herbert, with regard to an information sign for the land. In view of this, the Society has written to Steve Herbert suggesting the name "Fabbro's Farm" for this land.

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Following the closure of the Eltham RSL premises in Main Road (see Newsletter No. 192) our Society has had on-going involvement with moves to ensure that the War Memorial Obelisk is removed to an appropriate location. Harry Gilham represents the Society on the committee established by the Council.

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Harry Gilham continues to host visits by local schools to our Local History Centre and the adjoining Courthouse. The most recent visit has been from Eltham Primary School. Pupils from Eltham East Primary School have presented Harry with a book of their observations from a visit earlier this year.

OTHER NEWS

Subscriptions for 2010/11 were due on 1st July but unfortunately some members have not paid yet. The Society does not have large cash reserves so it is important that subscriptions, which are our main source of income, are paid promptly if we are to continue to service our members. Outstanding payments would be appreciated or your advice if you no longer wish to receive the Newsletter.

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In recent months the number of members participating in our records workshops has increased but further support is always appreciated. The final workshops for this year will be at 9.30am on Monday 15th November and 7.30pm on Tuesday 7th December at 728 Main Road, Eltham.

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November is Local History Month at the Yarra Plenty Regional Libraries. There are events at all library branches throughout the month. At the Eltham Library there are talks on 4th November at 10.30 on German Heritage and on 18th November at 2.00 on researching land records in Victoria. Contact the Library for details and bookings.

A book with the grand title of “The Tower of Remembrance and War Memorial Park on Garden Hill at Kangaroo Ground Victoria” has been published and printed on behalf of the Society by Harry Gilham. Only a few copies were originally printed but Harry has now printed more and they are available for sale for \$10 each. Contact Harry to obtain your copy.

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Each year Nillumbik Shire Council provides financial support to each of the nine historical societies and heritage groups operating within the shire by way of a Heritage Grant. We have received a grant of \$500 for the 2010-11 financial year which will be applied towards the operating costs of our Local History Centre. We are grateful to the Council for its support.

RHSV AWARD OF MERIT

At the September meeting Harry Gilham was presented with the Royal Historical Society’s Award of Merit by RHSV President, Andrew Lemon. Andrew as a member of our Society was able to speak from personal knowledge about Harry’s achievements as Society President from 1993 to 2009.

Awards of Merit have previously been made to Russell Yeoman and Sue Law.



Andrew Lemon, President of RHSV, presenting the Award of Merit to Harry Gilham

Jim Connor
President

Russell Yeoman
Secretary

David Johns
Treasurer /
Membership Secretary
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