

ELTHAM DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Incorporated

No. A0016285F

728 MAIN ROAD (PO BOX 137) ELTHAM 3095

Website: www.tinyurl.com/elthamdhs

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NEWSLETTER

NO. 202 JANUARY 2012

NEXT MEETING

8-00 PM WEDNESDAY 8th FEBRUARY

SPEAKER LIZ PIDGEON

"FAMILY AND LOCAL HISTORY AT THE LIBRARY"

ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZENS' CENTRE

LIBRARY PLACE ELTHAM

(FORMERLY OLD SHIRE OFFICE DRIVEWAY)

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**Our Banner in the 1989 Eltham Festival Parade**

## **2012 PROGRAM**

Attached to this Newsletter is the Society's program for this year. It is also available on the Society's website and extra copies are available if required.

It includes topics and speakers for each meeting as well as dates for other activities, committee meetings, records workshops and heritage excursions. Any changes through the year will be notified in the Newsletter.

A growing group of members continues to make progress with getting our records into systematic order but there remains much work to be done. Members are encouraged to come along to our records workshops to assist with this task. They are held on the first Tuesday (evenings) and third Monday (mornings) of most months. Dates are listed in the program with the 2012 workshops commencing from 7<sup>th</sup> February.

## **FEBRUARY MEETING**

Liz Pidgeon is the local and family history librarian at the Yarra Plenty Regional Library service, which extends across the Nillumbik, Banyule and Whittlesea municipalities.



At our general meeting on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> February we will be fortunate to hear Liz speak about the range of services available at our libraries to support anyone interested in undertaking research into family and local history. Liz will also speak about a number of internet based resources that can be accessed at any of our local libraries to help you search and discover.

## **J B NORTH AND THE MERUKA ESTATE**

The first part of this article is an edited version of a piece written by Marjorie North in 1989 as part of the Society's Family History Project co-ordinated by Blanche Shallard. It deals with the family of her husband, Tralford, and their home in what is now Meruka Park.

Following that is further historical information about the North family property and associated land holdings.

"Briefly, Joseph Benjamin North (JBN) was a professional musician, favouring the violin, and well-known in Melbourne, Victoria, late 1800s - mid 1900s. He taught privately, played in early days in small ensembles, and in the present re-named Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. He also was a solo player, and in later days was an examiner for music for the Melbourne Conservatorium.

He and a good friend Mr Leon Lambert (LL), a Melbourne architect, bought, in three parcels, approximately 60 acres of land with a frontage running along the creek and bordering part of the present Karingal Drive (1989), towards the present junction of Karingal Drive and Sherbourne Road, and continuing to the railway bridge over Sherbourne Road. This rail line towards Eltham Station formed another boundary of the property.

A single lane wooden bridge had to be built and paid for by JBN and LL, giving entrance and exit from Sherbourne Road to the joint property.

LL designed two wooden houses, his own being nearer the railway line, and North's home being several hundred yards away on a nearly hill.

LL and his wife moved to his home in 1920 and a few months later, JBN and his wife, Lucinda Matilda, son Tralford E. aged 14 and his daughter Camille D., aged 7 years, occupied their own home. This house, many years later, was sold to a family named GREEN, who finally sold the house and remaining land to the Shire of Eltham.

This house is now (1989) known as Meruka House and the property as Meruka Park, used for and by the Eltham ratepayers. Nearby resident Mr Alan Gardner gave the park the name of Meruka.



Glen Ellen  
Homestead



The North house  
'Tralford'  
later Meruka House

Before the two houses were built, the land was roughly divided in half, and many years later a large amount at the rear of the property was sold to Mr Bernhard Smith, which is still occupied by his widow and one of their sons. (1989)

When JBN's son played with the Montmorency Cricket Club, JBN had a half cricket pitch in concrete laid down on which the team practised on Sunday mornings, JBN at times acted as an honorary umpire for the team.

In the late 1920s JBN and friends laid out a 9-hole golf course, very up-hill and down-dale, with dirt scrapes and he had a score-card printed.

JBN and his son travelled by train daily to the city, walking along the railway line and over the railway bridge across the Diamond Creek to Eltham Station. During winter's dark days, both carried a kerosene lantern, leaving these under "Phillips" cypress hedge. This "house and farm" was later bought as the site for the present Judge Book Village. The lanterns were collected on the return trip, and were needed to light the path home.

Both JB and LL came to Eltham "to escape the rat race". JBN's wife died in 1940. Approximately six years later he re-married, and later still moved to Dromana. LL died a few years later while still residing on his property, which was bought by Mr Fred Warne, a Melbourne businessman."

The land bought by JBN and LL comprised Lots 2 to 6 of the subdivision of Montmorency Farm. This farm was subdivided in 1911 into lots of about 10 acres each and was marketed as the Greensborough Railway Station Estate.

Despite its Montmorency origins, the land is now located in Eltham, being east of Sherbourne Road/Karingal Drive which forms the boundary between Montmorency and Eltham (and between the City of Banyule and the Shire of Nillumbik).

Karingal Drive was the original road from Eltham to Greensborough, which ran through Montmorency Farm. It was known by a number of names and apparently to avoid confusion a new name was allocated by Eltham and Diamond Valley Councils in the 1970s. Karingal is a well used Aboriginal word understood to mean "happy home".

The creek that runs through the land parallel to Karingal Drive was once called the Eltham West Drain but now is officially known as Karingal Yallock Creek.

Generally, the land owned by JBN now comprises Meruka Park and that owned by LL is the Meruka residential estate based on Meruka Drive. The Norths named their house 'Tralford'. According to Marjorie North, the name Meruka was suggested by Alan Gardner and so was apparently not used by the North family. The name appears to be of Indian origin and its connection with the land is not known.

JBN's house was used for some years by the Council as a community arts facility and as emergency accommodation. It fell into disrepair and was demolished about 1990. The Meruka Child Care Centre has been built on the site and incorporates some of the architectural features of the old house. The original drive flanked by large old cypress trees remains. These trees are considered to be of local heritage significance and for this reason Meruka Park is covered by a Heritage Overlay under the Nillumbik Planning Scheme. Part of the park has been preserved as habitat for rare local flora.

LL's house, named "Glen Ellen", remains in a well-preserved state and fronts Meruka Drive.

The land sold to Bernhard Smith comprised Lots 2 and 3 on the northern side of the JBN/LL property with an area of about 24 acres. Smith named the property "Nerreman Park" and, with his wife Isa, built a house on the top of the hill near Ryans Road.



Nerreman is an Aboriginal word said to mean "river bend". On the creek he built a concrete arch dam in accordance with award winning principles developed by his father. This 1940 structure is of local historical significance and is covered by a Heritage Overlay under the Nillumbik Planning Scheme.

This property was subdivided for residential purposes in the early 1990s with the main access being the street Nerreman Gateway. The Smith house remains on a large lot within the subdivision. For more information on the Smith family and the dam see "*Nillumbik Now and Then*" by Marguerite Marshall, page 136.



Society members, including Majorie North making the banner at Meruka House - 1986

### **THE SOCIETY BANNER 1986**

The following series of articles from the Newsletters of 1986 detail the Society's involvement in the Community Banner Project sponsored by Eltham Shire Council. This was an important co-operative member project for our Society. The banner was used for a number of Society Exhibitions and Eltham Festival Parades. It now hangs in the Withers Gallery at our Local History Centre.

#### NO. 47 – MARCH 1986

Tracey Naughton is the Shire of Eltham's Community Artist. She has developed a programme called "As We Are" with the aim of encouraging local groups to produce their own banners.

Preliminary consideration has been given to this matter and the Society's Committee supports the proposal. Some discussions have taken place on a suitable design.

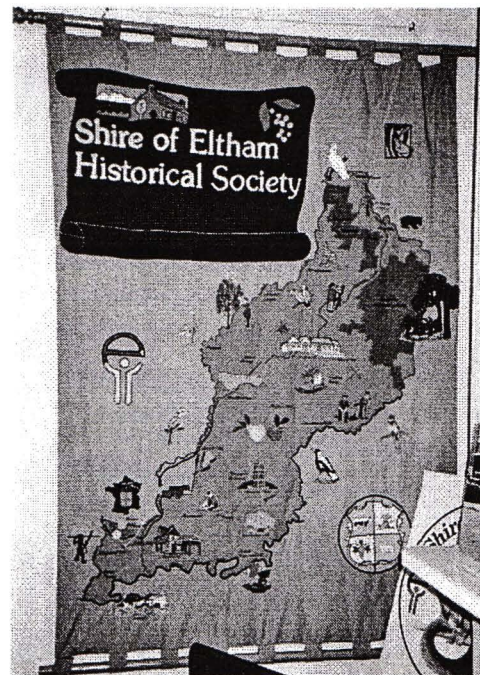
The Workshop meeting on April 23<sup>rd</sup> will be devoted to this project. Tracey will talk about the project generally and our project in particular. She will show slides of other groups' banners. We will then be in a position to discuss our involvement and develop a suitable programme.

All members are welcome to attend. Those interested in participating in the project are especially urged to be there. Participation is not just limited to those with "sewing" skills. In a positive anti-discrimination statement Tracey has encouraged men to become involved in the project.

#### NO. 48 – MAY 1986

A small group of members attended the workshop meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> April to hear the Shire's Community Arts Officer, Tracey Naughton, talk about the possibility of the Society making its own banner. Tracey has been involved in a number of such projects with other organizations. She has the necessary expertise and enthusiasm to provide instruction to members wishing to participate.

It was agreed that the Society should make a banner based on a map of the Shire with buildings and other features of interest shown in their respective locations. Each item of interest could be the project of an individual member and would then be sewn on to complete the banner. Each item would be cut from appropriate material with detail being applied by machining or fabric paint.



Members who attended were enthusiastic about the project. It is anticipated that additional members will want to become involved.

It is proposed to work on the banner at the next few workshop meetings, which will be held on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Dates for the next two are shown above. The venue will be Meruka House, which is the Shire's Community Arts Centre and this will enable ready access to sewing machines and other useful equipment.

No special expertise is required to participate in this project. All members are invited to come along to find out more about it and hopefully to make a contribution. The finished banner will be used in a display of local banners and can then be used by the Society for such events as the Eltham Festival Parade.

### NO. 50 – SEPTEMBER 1986

The banner is nearing completion and those working on it are most pleased with the results. We have received help from a number of friends and from staff of the Community Arts Section of the Shire of Eltham. Community Artist, Jud Degan, has shown a great interest in our project and has been extremely helpful.

The banner will become part of a display of banners by various local groups in October. The opening will be at the Eltham Community Centre on Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup>. The display will then move to Woolworths Arcade, Eltham for the period Monday 13<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 18<sup>th</sup>.

### NO. 51 – NOVEMBER 1986

The banner is now complete and together with banners produced by other groups has been in displays at the Community Centre, Woolworths Arcade and other locations. It is to be used next in the Festival Parade.

The banner has received much favourable comment and this is a project that the Society can be proud of. Thanks to all members and friends who helped make the banner and to those who have assisted the organisers of the displays.

### 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 14<sup>th</sup> March 2012 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 2011 Annual General Meeting
3. Reports
  - a. President's Report
  - b. Treasurer's Report
  - c. Any other reports
4. 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 operation 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 workload 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.

### **AND ALSO**

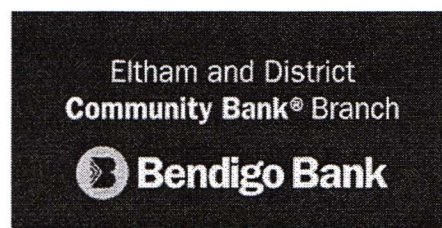
Gwen and Doug Orford regularly represent our Society at meetings of the Association of Eastern Historical Societies. Other Committee members attend from time to time. Members who are interested in attending any of these meetings are invited to contact Gwen. Meeting dates for 2012 are 28<sup>th</sup> January at Balwyn, 31<sup>st</sup> March at Croydon (Conference), 30<sup>th</sup> June at Marysville and 22<sup>nd</sup> September at Box Hill (AGM).

Christmas greetings were received from Margaret Taylor of Eltham, England who visited here at Christmas 1997. The card was accompanied by a letter telling of Margaret's recent busy life. Anyone who would like to read the letter should contact Russell Yeoman.

St Margaret's Anglican Church, Eltham is celebrating its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a number of events extending over this year. The church is included in the Victorian Heritage Register. Society members are invited to a celebration on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2012, commencing with a church service at 10.30 am and followed by a barbecue and entertainment. See Russell Yeoman if you would like a copy of the invitation. Church Archivist Dr Geoff Sandy will speak on this subject at our AGM in March.

An informal meeting is to be held in Eltham to assess interest in establishing an Eltham U3A campus. This meeting will be at 10.00 am on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2012 at the Nillumbik Community Health Centre, 917 Main Road, Eltham. Further information can be obtained from Mal Harrop, telephone 9439 1696 or Daryl Brooke, telephone 9430 9100.

*The Eltham District Historical Society appreciates  
the financial support provided by the Eltham and  
District branch of the Bendigo Bank*



Jim Connor  
President

Phone - 9439 5916

Russell Yeoman  
Secretary

Phone - 9439 9717

David Johns  
Treasurer /  
Membership Secretary  
Phone - 9434 3357

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# Eltham District Historical Society

Incorporated - No. A0016285F

## Local History Centre

728 Main Road (PO Box 137)

Eltham Victoria 3095

## Email

edhs1@bigpond.com

## Website

www.tinyurl.com/elthamdhs

## General Meetings

held at:

Eltham Senior Citizens' Centre

Library Place

Eltham

(Melway Map 21 ref. J5)

## Program 2012

### FEBRUARY

Tuesday 7th 7.30pm

Records Workshop

Wednesday 8th 8.00pm

### General Meeting

Liz Pidgeon

Looking for Local and Family History

Monday 20th 9.30am

Records Workshop

Wednesday 29th 7.30pm

Committee Meeting

### MARCH

Saturday 3rd 2.00pm

Heritage Excursion

Tuesday 6th 7.30pm

Records Workshop

Wednesday 14th 8.00pm

### Annual General Meeting

Dr. Geoff Sandy

St Margaret's 150th Anniversary

Monday 19th 9.30am

Records Workshop

### APRIL

Tuesday 3rd 7.30pm

Records Workshop

Wednesday 11th 7.30pm

Committee Meeting

Monday 16th 9.30am

Records Workshop

### MAY

Tuesday 1st 7.30pm

Records Workshop

### MAY (continued)

Saturday 5th 2.00pm

Heritage Excursion

Wednesday 9th 8.00pm

### General Meeting

Kevin Patterson

Hurstbridge Railway Centenary

Monday 21st 9.30am

Records Workshop

### JUNE

Tuesday 5th 7.30pm

Records Workshop

Wednesday 13th 7.30pm

Committee Meeting

Monday 18th 9.30am

Records Workshop

### JULY

Tuesday 3rd 7.30pm

Records Workshop

Saturday 7th 2.00pm

Heritage Excursion

Wednesday 11th 8.00pm

### General Meeting

Jim Connor

A Muddy History

Monday 16th 9.30am

Records Workshop

### AUGUST

Tuesday 7th 7.30pm

Records Workshop

Wednesday 8th 7.30pm

Committee Meeting

Monday 20th 9.30am

Records Workshop

### SEPTEMBER

Saturday 1st 2.00pm

Heritage Excursion

Tuesday 4th 7.30pm

Records Workshop

Wednesday 12th 8.00pm

### General Meeting

Panel – Local Farm Stories

Monday 17th 9.30am

Records Workshop

### OCTOBER

Tuesday 2nd 7.30pm

Records Workshop

Wednesday 10th 7.30pm

Committee Meeting

Monday 15th 9.30am

Records Workshop

### NOVEMBER

Saturday 3rd 2.00pm

Heritage Excursion

Sunday 11th 2.00pm

Cemetery Excursion

Wednesday 14th 8.00pm

### General Meeting

Jenni Mitchell - My Mother Grace

Monday 19th 9.30am

Records Workshop

### DECEMBER

Tuesday 4th 7.30pm

Records Workshop

Wednesday 5th 7.30pm

Committee Meeting

Wednesday 12th 6.30pm

Christmas Function Eltham Court House