

# **ELTHAM DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**Incorporated**

**No. A0016285F**

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## **NEWSLETTER**

**NO. 206 SEPTEMBER 2012**

**NEXT MEETING**

**8-00 PM WEDNESDAY 12th SEPTEMBER**

**SPEAKER PANEL**

**"LOCAL FARM STORIES"**

**ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZENS' CENTRE**

**LIBRARY PLACE ELTHAM**

**(FORMERLY OLD SHIRE OFFICE DRIVEWAY)**



Eltham Gateway – early 1900s  
corner of Main Road and Dalton Street

## **HERITAGE EXCURSIONS PROGRAM**

**2PM SATURDAY**

**1st SEPTEMBER**

**ELTHAM GATEWAY  
SOUTHERN WALK**

## **SEPTEMBER MEETING – LOCAL FARMING STORIES**

For well over half a century following European settlement, the Eltham district was very much a farming community. The small village that grew up in Holloway's "Little Eltham" subdivision serviced the local farmers and even within the village much of the land was used as small farms.

It was not until the 1910s and 20s that there was any significant residential development outside the village boundaries. Even then the large Montmorency Farm to the west and the Belle Vue Farm to the north took many years to become fully developed.

At this meeting a panel of members will relate stories from this farming era and these will be illustrated by pictures from the collections of the Society and members.

The subjects discussed will include:

- "Little Eltham" farms, particularly on the larger central lots along the Diamond Creek.
- The Fabbros and other Eltham South farmers, with remnants of their market garden activities continuing into the 2000s.
- Montmorency Farm, which remained largely intact until after the railway came through in 1902.



c1900 View of Eltham - small farms along the Diamond Creek valley

This series of illustrated short talks will include information from Society files and personal research. Visitors and new members are most welcome to attend.

## **SEPTEMBER EXCURSION – ELTHAM GATEWAY SOUTHERN WALK.**

The excursion on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> September will follow the Eltham Gateway south from Brougham Street. The Eltham Gateway is the name adopted for the section of Main Road leading from the roundabout at Fitzsimons Lane to the Eltham town centre.

This excursion will start at 2pm at our Local History Centre at 728 Main Road (cnr. Brougham Street, Melway ref. 21J7). The southern part of the Gateway contains many of the historic buildings and environmental features that give the

Gateway its unique character. The walk is about 2.5km in length and as there will be some stops along the way it will take about 2.5 hours. This free walk is open to Society members and the general public. Phone number for contact on the day is 0409 021 063.



Main Road bridge over the Diamond Creek

## LAUGHING WATER PROJECT

Nillumbik Shire Council has received Government funding for a project to research the history and local stories for an area based on Laughing Waters Road, Eltham. Laughing Water was once the name of a house adjoining the Yarra River but the project includes a wider area than just that property. This formerly privately owned land now lies within the Yarra Valley Metropolitan Park. A number of houses in the area are used for the Council's Artist in Residence Program.



Russell Yeoman and Doug Orford being interviewed by Jane Woollard

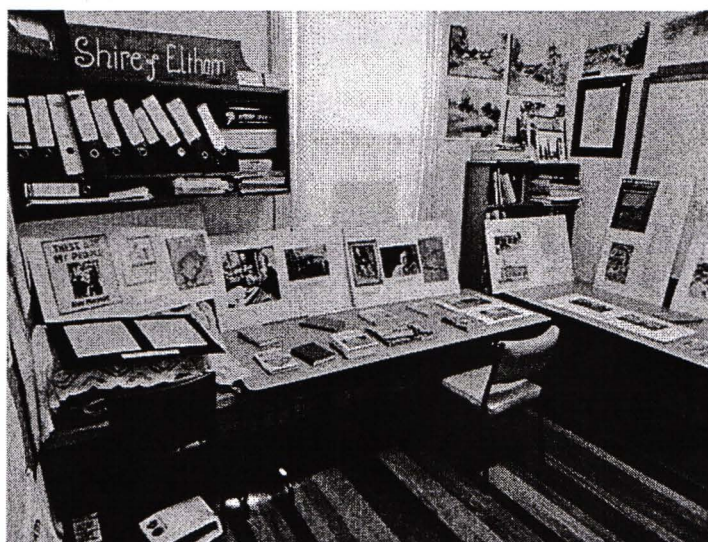
Doug Orford, Russell Yeoman and Jim Connor have been assisting with the research for this project, which is being undertaken by Jane Woollard from Nillumbik Shire Council. Anyone who thinks they can contribute stories or historical information is invited to contact Jim.

## ELTHAM LITERARY TOURS

During August the Eltham Branch of the Yarra Plenty Regional Library has run a series of Literary Tours of the Eltham area. Sites visited included places where local writers have lived or worked.

Participants enjoyed a short visit to our Local History Centre where we had arranged small displays featuring famous author Alan Marshall and respected literary and academic figures, Clem and Nina Christesen.

Jim Connor, Russell Yeoman and Sue Law spoke about these people and gave readings from their work. Mention was also made of other writers associated with our Society, including Dr. Andrew Lemon, Dr. Ken Eckersall, Mick Woiwod, Maureen Jones, Dr. Geoff Sandy and Alistair Knox.



Display featuring Alan Marshall

We have been pleased to work with staff from the Eltham Branch Library and contribute to this popular project. The tours, which have been fully booked on each occasion, have provided opportunities for local residents and visitors to our area to experience places and hear stories relating to local literary figures.

## MY RECOLLECTIONS OF ELTHAM PAST

*by Margaret Harding*

My family of Elizabeth and Alec Chapman moved to Eltham in 1946 into a cottage on the opposite side of the Diamond Creek from where the little train now operates in the Lower Park. At that time Eltham truly was a country town and the beer garden at the Pub was the main meeting place for most inhabitants on a Saturday afternoon.

I attended Eltham Primary School where I started as a 4 year old (my birthday being slightly after the mid year intake) that happened then. My mother spent a lot of days taking me back to school when I had dismissed myself and walked the 1km home alone.

Bremner's Common (now Wingrove Park) was a big attraction with its dam and tadpoling, which I found much more entertaining than school. (Mrs Bremner ran a Service Station on the site of the current one).

Another attraction at this site was the circus there a couple of times a year. Watching them put up the circus tent was very interesting and even more of an attraction was the feeding of the lions in cages and the monkeys and elephants among the other animals that are not found in a circus these days.

At school then we were provided with hot chocolate at morning recess where the mothers would prepare it in the shelter shed. The only form of classroom heating was an open fire. Worse was the warm milk given in the summer months.

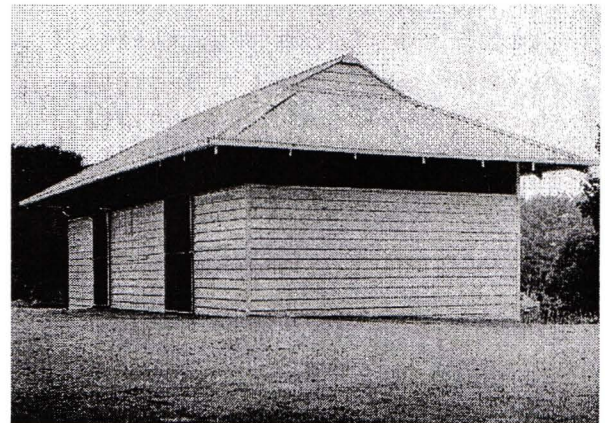
By the time I was near finishing at primary school we used to be able to walk along the Main Road at lunchtime to Mrs Mitchell's shop for a delicious hot pie. As I recall there was no supervision for this departure from the school grounds.

It is interesting that some of the other children I started school with I still have contact with, in fact, one is a very good friend although now living in Perth. That is the other thing about Eltham; many who grew up here continue to live in the area.

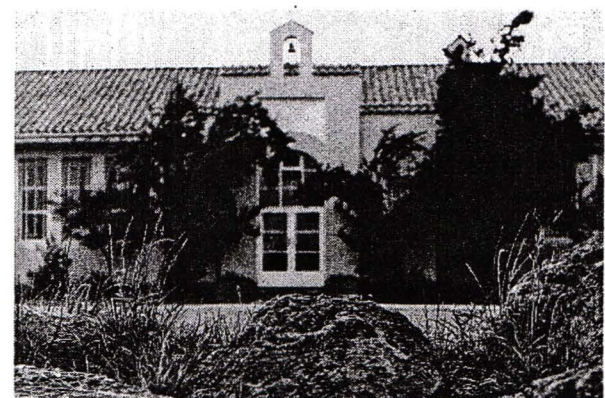
Following primary school the natural progression was to Eltham High School. There was only the main building at that time and I can remember our first assembly at the front entrance. During the time I was at High school several new classrooms were added and the school hall. I remember the musical plays such as 'HMS Pinafore' and other classical musicals being performed. I also remember countless hours doing marching practice.



Circus at Wingrove Park

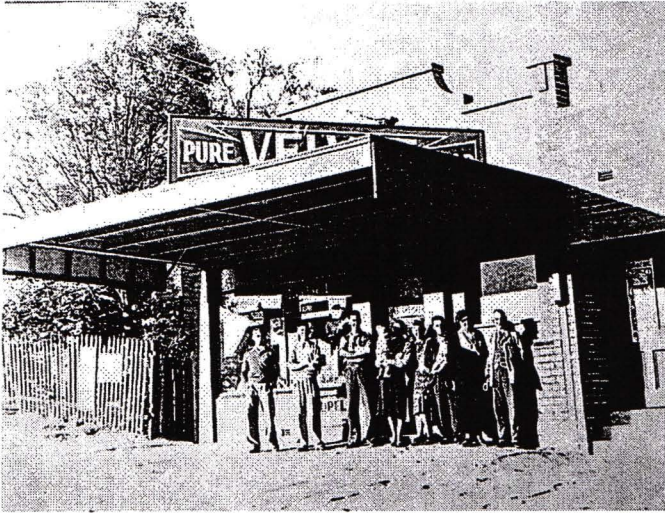


Eltham Primary School Shelter Shed



Early view of Eltham High School

The main street shops when I was young consisted of the Blue Gum milk bar at the far end, a grocery store and a shoemaker where Coles currently stands. Opposite there was Lyon's Garage. They also provided a bus service and when we got off the train this little bus would tour the back streets taking each individual to their home, sometimes this could take quite considerable time.



C1940 Burgoyne shop near corner of Main Road and Bridge Street

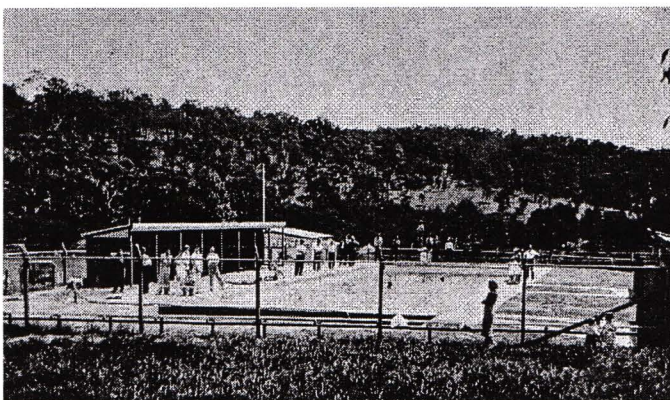
There was also a Black Smith next to the Chiropractic Practice opposite Alistair Knox Park, another milk bar/general store on the corner of Bridge Street/Main Road where a shop currently still operates. There was also a butcher's shop down from the Pub opposite Franklin Street. The only Doctor was on the corner of Brougham Street and Main Road near the Court House. On Saturday afternoon I was occasionally allowed to go to the movies in the Town Hall, which also stood on the site of the Coles centre.



Eltham Hall where movies were shown

Often the Fire Alarm would sound and everyone would run outside to watch the fire truck leave with the volunteers clutching on the back.

The other attraction during summer of course was the swimming pool, which was a small concrete pool filled with water pumped from the Diamond Creek, sometimes it was like a mud puddle. I preferred the nearer to home Yarra/Diamond Creek junction.



The swimming pool in Eltham Central Park

As recreation the churches were another attraction for the Sunday school picnics to Mordialloc in the back of the moving van, with benches tied into the back for use to "sit" on. Too bad when we went around a corner.

In the early days we had an Ice Man deliver the ice once a week for "refrigeration". The green grocer came around in a horse and cart as did the milkman and the bread was delivered, but I constantly got into trouble for eating the middle out on

the way from the box it was delivered to in Mt Pleasant Road across the paddock. The milkman finally would not come down our street after his horse bolted one morning and took off across the paddock. We also had the "Pan Man" come weekly and whose visit I would avoid.

Our nearest shop was where the flower stall is located opposite the Lower Park. It consisted of a Tea Room and Milk Bar. There was a Public Telephone there, which was the only contact to anyone else. We were a one car family so my mother's movements were very limited as the Eltham Station was a couple of kilometres away and a trip to the city was quite an event.

Being an only child growing up was a little lonely, however rambling along the creek with my Mum, picking mushrooms and picking cherry plums for jam and the dogs catching rabbits, which we ate if we could get them away from the dogs.

We also liked to go into the Lower Park during school holidays when the Greek people came to camp and they would sing and dance around the camp fire and it all seemed so different to us as this was early days of immigration.

Childhood was relatively simple and carefree and I wish the kids of today had the freedom of my youth and the healthy outdoor lifestyle of the "olden days".

#### **AND ALSO**

A variety of tasks are available for members at our regular records workshops. They include filing, cataloguing, research projects and even "housekeeping" of our Local History Centre. It is most pleasing that we are seeing an increasing number of members at these workshops. Coming dates for records workshops are as follows:

Tuesdays 7.30 pm	4 <sup>th</sup> September	2nd October
Mondays 9.30 am	17 <sup>th</sup> September	15 <sup>th</sup> October

Advance notice is given of an additional item in the Society's 2012 Program. On Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> December there will be a joint meeting with Greensborough Historical Society at the old Eltham Courthouse. Further details will be given in the November Newsletter.

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

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