



ELTHAM DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Incorporated

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NEWSLETTER

NO. 212 SEPTEMBER 2013

NEXT MEETING

8-00 PM WEDNESDAY 11th SEPTEMBER

PANEL PRESENTATION

"TIM BURSTALL'S ELTHAM CHARACTERS"

ELTHAM SENIOR CITIZENS' CENTRE

LIBRARY PLACE ELTHAM

(FORMERLY OLD SHIRE OFFICE DRIVEWAY)

HERITAGE EXCURSIONS PROGRAM

2PM SATURDAY 7th SEPTEMBER

LAUGHING WATERS WALK

2PM SATURDAY 2nd NOVEMBER

SHILLINGLAW FARM WALK



The Laughing Waters property

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Years before he became one of Australia's best-known film directors, Tim Burstall lived with his wife Betty in Napier Crescent, Montmorency. Betty was also to become famous in her own right as the founder of "La Mama" experimental theatre. The Burstalls were heavily involved in the Eltham social scene that included the Montsalvat community.

From the early 1950s Burstall kept a diary of daily events within his circle of friends and colleagues. His writing includes much personal, political and social commentary. The diaries for the period November 1953 to December 1954 have been included in a book by Hilary McPhee titled "Memoirs of a Young Bastard". The book includes short biographical notes about many of the characters that are mentioned in the diaries.



From the cover of 'Memoirs of a Young Bastard'

The format of next meeting is based on this section of the book. A panel of members will read from the book covering a range of people from local artists and mud brick builders to some well known people in the wider Melbourne context. Some, such as comedian Barry Humphries, went on to become internationally famous. The readings will be accompanied by portraits selected from the book, our Society photo collection or other pictorial sources.

Our meeting program provides a wide range of subjects and formats covering many aspects of local and more general history. We think that this meeting will provide an unusual and informative experience. As usual, visitors and new members are most welcome at the meeting.

LAUGHING WATERS WALK

This excursion is a follow up to the Laughing Waters Story told to us by Jane Woollard at our Annual General Meeting in March. It involves a walk along Laughing Waters Road to its eastern end and returning partly over the same route – a total distance of about 2.5km. On the way we will walk into the two artist in residence properties to view the houses on them that are associated with Alistair Knox, Gordon Ford and others in the local mud brick and artistic community. The excursion does not include an internal inspection of these houses.

Our walk on 7th September will start at 2pm at the corner of Laughing Waters and Overbank Roads Eltham (Melway Ref. 22 F9). There is limited parking at this location so please park carefully. Arrange to carpool with friends if possible. For those not wishing to walk the full distance there will be the opportunity to drive along the road to the two driveway locations.

The walk is along a well-formed bushland road but parts of the short driveways are a bit steep and rough. This free walk is open to the public as well as Society members. It should take about 2.5 hours. Dogs are not permitted.

The phone number for contact on the day is 0409 021 063.

SHIRE OF ELTHAM PIONEERS PHOTOGRAPH PROJECT

To celebrate the Centenary of the Shire of Eltham in 1971 one of the many projects initiated by Eltham Council was a collection of historical photographs of the Shire. This collection of more than 600 photos comprised mainly originals loaned by residents that were then professionally copied before being returned to the owners. From this collection the illustrations in the centenary history of the Shire, "Pioneers and Painters" by Alan Marshall, were selected.



Research looking north up Ingrams Road

For some years the collection was kept in the strong room of the Eltham Shire Office and was not readily available for public viewing. Some of the photos were occasionally used in exhibitions by our Society or for special Council events.

On the initiative of our Society the collection was transferred to the Eltham Library where it was more accessible to the public. Over intervening years the photos have proved popular with school groups visiting the library and for research by students. About 150 of the photos have been digitised and can be accessed through the Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL) website or the Victorian Collections website.



A miner's hut, Christmas Hills

The copy negatives of the collection are stored at our Local History Centre as part of the Shire of Eltham memorabilia collection that has been passed on to the Society by Nillumbik Shire Council.

A program has been developed for the digitisation of the remainder of this collection titled the Shire of Eltham Pioneers Photograph Collection. The title recognises that the collection covers the whole of the former Shire of Eltham, extending from Kinglake to Lower Plenty.

The YPRL in partnership with our Society has received a grant for this project under the Victorian Government's Local History Grants Program, administered by the Public Records Office Victoria.

Liz Pidgeon, Local and Family History Librarian at YPRL prepared the grant application. Craig Ondarchie MP presented a cheque for the grant amount of \$3,775 at a ceremony at the Eltham Library on 3rd July.



Craig Ondarchie MP, library staff and society members at the cheque presentation

Maureen Jones and Russell Yeoman have been working with Liz Pidgeon preparing the collection for digitisation.

Two photographs from the collection are used as illustrations for this Newsletter.

VALE JOY NESS

Sadly we report that Winifred Joy Ness, known to all as Joy, died peacefully at home at Leith Park, St Helena on 22nd July 2013. Joy, who reached the age of 94 years, and her husband Bruce, were foundation members of our Society in 1967. They took an active role in the Society for many years, including hosting a number of Society events at their Kangaroo Ground farm.

Joy was active in the Kangaroo Ground Community as a member of the Presbyterian Church, the Country Womens' Association, and supporting Bruce's role in the local fire brigade. Joy and Bruce were significant players in the establishment of the Andrew Ross Museum at Kangaroo Ground. After more than sixty years on their farm Joy and Bruce retired to Leith Park. Bruce died in 2004.

A memorial service for Joy was held at Kangaroo Ground on 1st August 2013.

The following article appeared in the "Diamond Valley News" on the occasion of Joy and Bruce's 60th Wedding Anniversary in 2000.

"HIS CUP RUNNETH OVER WITH JOY

The 1940 Melbourne Cup was won by a seven-year-old chestnut gelding called Old Rowley – not that Bruce and Joy Ness remember. Cup day of that year was the day before the couple's wedding. "The race was far from my thoughts," Mrs Ness said.

Last month they celebrated their 60th anniversary with a quiet dinner with their family.

Like many Diamond Valley couples of their generation, the couple got to know each other at the dances held in Panton Hill, Diamond Creek and Arthurs Creek.

"That was the main fun in those days," Mr Ness said.

Young Bruce Ness offered to escort his future wife home from a returned soldiers' ball one evening and the couple eventually married.

They moved to the house in Kangaroo Ground that had been built by Bruce's grandfather, James, in the 1850s.

The property was the first to be settled in the district, and the Nesses continued the family tradition of farming the land while adding rooms to the house to accommodate a growing family.

Four grandchildren and four great-grandchildren were to follow their two daughters, Janet and Judith.

The couple said "dodging bushfires" had been among their more eventful experiences over the years.

Mr Ness was involved with the Kangaroo Ground CFA for more than 50 years, and his services to the brigade led to him being awarded the British Empire Medal.

Mrs Ness said the key to a successful marriage was "sympathy, patience and understanding".



Joy and Bruce Ness

A GENEROUS DONATION

Our society has been very fortunate to have recently received a donation of \$1000 from the Eltham Community Craft and Produce Market Committee of Management. This has been used to purchase our own projector for use at our meetings and other events. We appreciate their support.

The Eltham Community Craft and Produce Market is a non-profit organisation run by a committee of volunteers who donate their time to running this monthly market, in the vicinity of the Eltham Library. Since it was established nearly 35 years ago, the market has made donations to over 50 community groups and causes. It is a unique market in that it sells homemade, homegrown and handcrafted products, but no commercial products.

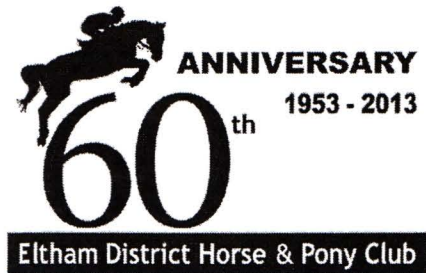
The market is held every third Sunday and every first and third Sunday in November and December each year. Their next market is on Sunday September 15th, 2013.

ELTHAM HORSE AND PONY CLUB by Tony Brocksopp

The Eltham Horse and Pony Club celebrate its 60th birthday in November 2013.

The Pony Club was a dream of Dianna Bassett-Smith, which came true, based on the British Horse Society Pony Club that was formed in 1929 and is a worldwide organisation.

A meeting was called at 'Lavender Park', the home of Mrs. Mary Grant and her brother George 'Mel' Balfour. Invited to the meeting were Baye Skues, Eric Rundle, Ben Taylor, the Barringtons, Smiths, Lou Lewis and Gwen Cascaden. They all supported Dianna Basset-Smith for forming a Pony Club.



The first formal meeting was held at 'Landscape', which was the Barrington's home. Bernie Smith, who owned 'Nerriman Park' off Ryans Road, was the treasurer for over thirty years. They negotiated with the Lands Department for the use of the grounds in Eltham Lower Park for a peppercorn rent.

Eltham was the 4th Pony Club in Victoria, the other three being Frankston, Templestowe and Western District; together they formed the Pony Club Association of Victoria at Diana Basset-Smith's instigation. About twelve riders attended the first rally in the school holidays in early 1954. The aim was to care for their ponies, harness and have fun.

Recreational and instruction activities were carried out on a monthly basis. Members enjoyed trail rides along Mt Pleasant Road up to Laughing Water, annual hunts at Viewbank and annual camps at 'Marden' the home of Frank and Mary Mclean, near the corner of Karingal Drive and St Helena Road.

There was great community support and the club featured in show jumping at the Royal Melbourne Show. This led to 3-day events at Mornington in 1961, with components being dressage, cross-country and show jumping. The Eltham Pony Club helped run the Eltham Easter Show and ran the Lavender Park One-day event in September.

Diana Basset-Smith found it a privilege to watch the children grow and develop. Club activities taught them self-discipline, to consider others and sharing their times with friends.

The Pony Club helped those who couldn't afford ponies and gear to ride. The Pony Club Association actually outnumbered the Boy Scout Movement at one stage.

The Eltham Horse and Pony Club still exists today in the southeastern corner of Eltham Lower Park and is still turning out state competitors. Diana Basset-Smith also helped in creating Kangaroo Ground Pony Club in the mid 1960's.



FROM OUR "RAILWAY" FILES by Harry Gilham

Men working on the extension of the railway to Eltham were blasting the rock face of the cutting, which leads into the tunnel at Heidelberg under Darebin Street.

On the 25th January 1901 such was the explosion at this construction site that the residence of Mr Walter Withers nearby was damaged. A local newspaper ran with this 'local' item:



Men working on construction of the railway to Eltham

"I think there must be a great carelessness somewhere, and if the department do not repair damages, I think you will agree with me when I say it is not only the poor or rich landowners at Greensborough or Eltham who suffer, but the poor house owner of Heidelberg.

We do thoroughly agree with local Mr Hart, and may add in our opinion the Railway Department is carrying out these construction works in a barbarous, ruthless and domineering manner that is becoming quite intolerable. We would suggest, seeing that the Council is disinclined to interfere, that the ratepayers petition the Shire President to convene a public indignation meeting."

An afterthought – perhaps public indignation meetings were a 'safety valve', which could also be used, in the present day and age.

LOCAL HISTORY MONTH

Each month the Yarra Plenty Regional Library service provides a range of interesting and varied programs for residents and visitors to our area.

As part of their Local History Month in November our heritage excursion at 2.00 pm on Saturday 2nd November 2013 will appropriately be held in the vicinity of the Eltham Library. This walk, to again be ably led by Russell Yeoman will generally cover the area occupied by the original Shillinglaw Farm.

The excursion will be similar to an earlier one led by Russell and is being repeated due to a number of requests from people who missed out last time on this popular, entertaining and informative walk.

AND ALSO

A variety of tasks is 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	3 rd September	1st October
Mondays 9.30 am	16 th September	14 th October

The Rotary Club of Eltham has invited the Society to participate in this year's Eltham Festival on Sunday 10th November, and will provide a small marquee and other equipment necessary to set up our display. We have accepted this invitation and so this is a preliminary advice to members that we will need people to look after the display during the day. Please advise Russell Yeoman if you are able to assist. The Eltham cemetery excursion listed in our program for that day has been shifted to Sunday 17th November 2013.

Just a gentle reminder that subscriptions for 2013-14 became due on 1st July. Details of subscriptions were given in the July Newsletter. Subscriptions can be sent to our post office box (PO Box 137 Eltham) or paid to David Johns at our September meeting.

Gabrielle Turner has advised that because she will be moving from Eltham she will not be able to continue as Assistant Secretary. Gabrielle's work in this position has proved to be of great benefit to the administrative functions of the Society and we appreciate her many contributions since taking up this role. We would like to continue the position and so we are seeking a volunteer who thinks he or she would be able to fill it. Please contact Russell Yeoman or Jim Connor if you are interested.

*The Eltham District Historical Society
appreciates the financial support provided by the
Eltham Community Craft and Produce Market
Committee of Management*



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