

ELTHAM DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Incorporated

No. A0016285F

728 MAIN ROAD (PO BOX 137) ELTHAM 3095

Website: <http://www.tinyurl.com/elthamdhs>

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NEWSLETTER NO. 213 NOVEMBER 2013



**NEXT MEETING
8-00PM WEDNESDAY 13th NOVEMBER 2013**

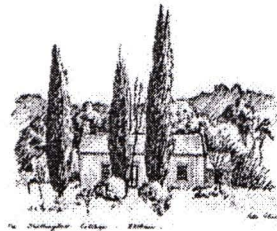
A LOCAL HISTORY TRIVIA QUIZ
...you don't know what you do know !!

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

**CHRISTMAS FUNCTION
6.30PM WEDNESDAY 11 DECEMBER 2013
OLD ELTHAM COURTHOUSE 730 MAIN ROAD ELTHAM**

HERITAGE EXCURSIONS PROGRAM

**2.00PM SATURDAY 2nd NOVEMBER
SHILLINGLAW FARM WALK**



**2.00PM SUNDAY 17TH NOVEMBER
ELTHAM CEMETERY TOUR**



NOVEMBER MEETING

The format for this meeting will be a Local History Trivia Quiz based on historical and present day pictures of Eltham and other local areas. Participants can work as individuals or in teams of up to four people.

Forms will be provided setting out the questions with space for written answers. Questions might include "Where is this historical Eltham building", "Who is this Eltham person", "Where would you find this sculpture", "In which direction was the photographer facing to take this photo" and the like.

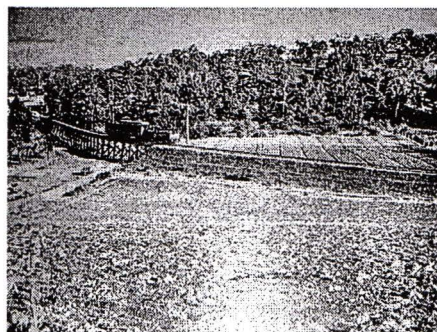


Quizmaster will be Russell Yeoman. There will be a prize for the winner or winning team.

This light-hearted meeting will be held at 8.00pm on Wednesday 13th November in the Eltham Senior Citizens' Centre, Library Place, Eltham.

SHILLINGLAW FARM WALK

Our regular November Heritage Walk will be presented in conjunction with the Yarra Plenty Regional Library Local History Month. It will start with a short talk in the Eltham Library, Panther Place, Eltham, (Melway ref. 21 J5) at 1.30pm on Saturday 2nd November. The proposed finishing time is 4.00pm.



Part of the original Shillinglaw Farm – looking west across the railway line

The walk will follow the original boundaries of the Shillinglaw Farm in central Eltham.

This farm comprised Lot 90 of Holloway's 1851 Little Eltham subdivision. It was originally thirty acres in area and situated east of the Diamond Creek and north of Henry Street.

This short walk will include a number of stops to look at early photographs and maps to illustrate the gradual reduction of the Shillinglaw Farm, as well as the early history of the adjacent railway. It will also include early photos of the Eltham Town Centre.

Ring Russell on 0409 021 063 for further information. *Bookings are required* through the Eltham Library on 9439 9266 or www.yprl.vic.gov.au

ELTHAM FESTIVAL

After a break of many years, our Society is participating in this year's Eltham Festival. We will be presenting a historical display in Alistair Knox Park on the main festival day, Sunday 10th November. The Rotary Club of Eltham is to provide a marquee and other equipment to assist our display.

We are seeking assistance from members to look after our display for short periods during the day. Please contact Russell Yeoman or Jim Connor if you can help by being rostered on for an hour or two.

In years past the Society was a regular participant in the Festival Parade. Our floats regularly won awards for categories such as "Best Eltham Theme", "Best in Parade" and the like. From time to time we also presented displays as part of the Festival.



Shire of Eltham Historical Society banner
1989 Eltham Festival Parade

Changing themes for the Festival have meant that we have not participated in recent years. However, the organisers are now intending to promote a cultural theme that better suits the type of display that we will provide.

ELTHAM CEMETERY VISIT



Sculpture by
Matcham Skipper in
the Eltham Cemetery

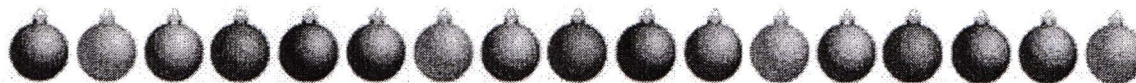
The Eltham Cemetery is the custodian of more than 150 years of Eltham history. Harry Gilham's research on the cemetery includes information on Eltham pioneers from those early years, service personnel from both world wars, as well as details of interesting and important locals buried there in more recent times.

Harry will lead a further tour of gravesites on Sunday 17th November at 2.00pm (not 10th November as stated in our 2013 Program). It will include a number of sites not visited on previous cemetery visit tours.

Enter the cemetery from Mt Pleasant Road (Melway Ref. 21 K9) and proceed to the car park near the south-western corner.

This tour is free and is open to the general public as well as Society members.

CHRISTMAS FUNCTION



The format for our Christmas function on Wednesday 11th December will be the same as for the last few years. We will be using the old Eltham Courthouse annexe, entered up the ramp from the rear car park and it will commence at 6.30pm. There is no formal agenda item but Jim Connor has agreed to again screen some 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 or fruit plate 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. Some drinks will be available and, of course, there will be coffee and tea. Bring along any special 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.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given in accordance with the Society's rules that the meeting of the Eltham District Historical Society Incorporated at 8.00pm on 12th February 2014 will be a Special General Meeting.



The purpose of the meeting will be to consider and decide upon any necessary changes to the Society's rules following the introduction of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012. Further details of this matter will be given in our January 2014 Newsletter.

Following the conclusion of the formal business of the Special General Meeting, the meeting will follow the usual-format with a local history topic.

2 BELL STREET, ELTHAM

The land at 2 Bell Street, opposite Eltham High School, was the last remnant of the former farms and market gardens in the Eltham South area and generally along the Diamond Creek through Eltham. It has been purchased by the Victorian Government and will be managed as public open space by Nillumbik Shire Council.

As an early step in the management of this land the Council commissioned a report on its cultural heritage significance. Samantha Westbrooke and Associates Pty. Ltd prepared this report, in association with historians Peter Mills PhD and Roark Muhlen-Schulte. It contains heritage guidelines for future development and use of the land.

Much historical information about this land and the surrounding area is contained in our Society records in various forms. However, Samantha Westbrooke's report (the report) brings all of this historical information together to provide a detailed historical account, including references to primary sources of information. This article provides a brief overview of the history, but anyone requiring further information could refer to the report. A copy is available at our Local History Centre.

2 Bell Street is situated on the east side of that street for its full length between Withers Way and Ely Street and is located within a bend of the Diamond Creek, with the creek forming the boundary on all sides other than the street. It is subject to flooding from the creek and a levee bank has been constructed to protect it from less severe floods. The report details the flooding history of the area and the severe detrimental effect that floods have had on agricultural uses along the creek.



Former pump house on the land at 2 Bell Street, Eltham

The site contains a farm shed of recent construction and an old pump house.

The land is situated within the Government township of Eltham extending southerly from Withers Way and Dalton Street. Much of the township was not subdivided into residential lots by the government. In particular, land along the Diamond Creek was sold as small farming properties. The Bell Street land was in this category. It comprised two Crown allotments (CAs. 7 & 8 no section Township of Eltham) with a total area of about 10 acres (4 hectares). These were purchased from the crown by Michael O'Shea in June 1852.

Later William West purchased this land, as evidenced by the rate records from 1864. West increased his land holdings to include most of the land between the creek and Falkiner Street and also the steeper land west of Falkiner Street. The West family farmed this land for many years, with market gardens on the creek flats and orchards on the higher land. Their house was on the west side of Falkiner Street. In the late 1800s the land passed to the next generation with William West (junior) and later Robert being the owners. William (junior) moved to Research where he became the proprietor of the Research Hotel.

In the early 1930s the West land was sold to Guido and Regina Fabbro who continued to farm it. The Fabbros built a large farmhouse on the slope above Falkiner Street. Their farming activities were severely affected by the major flood of 1934.

The Fabbros and their son Maurice (Maurie) continued to farm the land until recent times. In the 1990s the Council bought the creek side land south of Ely Street that is now parkland known as Barak Bushland. In 1994 the land west of Falkiner Street was sold for residential sub-division and both the Fabbro house and the old West house were demolished. This left the Bell Street land as the only agricultural land remaining.

Maurie Fabbro continued his market garden here until about 2007. He died in 2009.



Small scale farming on the Fabbro land in Eltham

Since taking responsibility for management of the 4.87 hectares of land the Council has also arranged site assessments into flood levels, potential contamination, flora and fauna, traffic and neighbourhood context. In order to ascertain community interest regarding future use of the land Council undertook an extensive public consultation process. A master plan has subsequently been developed, which generally proposes low-key development options, in stages, as funding becomes available. Some works have already commenced on site, including removal of weeds, rubbish and some plantings by a recently established Friends group.

Our Society has contributed background information, photographs and ideas throughout the consultation process, whilst strongly encouraging the ongoing recognition of the Fabbro family history and their connection with this land and early small scale farming practices in the local Eltham area.

Recently the Society has requested Nillumbik Shire Council to consider formally naming the Bell Street land as 'Fabbro Fields'. Council has now commenced the required process to rename the area, which will include consultation with any family members and the opportunity for public comment on the proposal.

MICK WOIWOD – PARADISE LOST

Mick Woiwod is a local historian who is a prolific writer and has published many books about the history of our local area. He is a valued member of the Eltham District Historical Society and a great supporter of other historical societies and heritage groups.

His latest book, *Paradise Lost: On and around the Great Moorool*, introduces the reader for the first time to the Yarra Valley as it had presented to *Wurundjeri* eyes in the centuries leading up to the white invasion when its river had flowed all the way across the land-bridge to Tasmania. The primary focus of this book is the Upper Yarra between Croydon, Mooroolbark and Launching Place, as interpreted for today's world by the clan-heads Billibellary, Wonga and Barak.



Illustration by Margo Heeley

Central to the book's storyline is a Dreamtime Story told to the white settler world by 'Old Billibellary' describing how in the days of the *Great Moorool*, Port Phillip Bay had been dry land upon which their neighbours, the *Boonwurrung* had hunted and gathered their wild-foods.

White settlers had of course taken little notice of such an implausible tale passed on to them by an old blackfellow. Nevertheless the story had been written down and quietly forgotten until latter-day geologists had rediscovered it and found it to be essentially true.

Geological research has demonstrated that, as little as a thousand years ago, Port Phillip had indeed been dry land and how a great lake had formed on the Yarra upstream of Brushy Creek; a great lake created by the blocking effect of land uplift along the region's Yarra and Brushy Creek still active geological fault-lines.

Paradise Lost takes the reader into that *Wurundjeri* wonder-world with its vast flocks of waterfowl, its rich aquatic life and its marsupial game — a paradise, indeed, that the *Wurundjeri* had revelled in over the millennia before it had been inexplicably drained away and regrettably lost in the blink of an eye.

There will be a launch of *Paradise Lost: On and around the Great Moorool* at 4.00pm on Sunday 17 November 2013 at the TarraWarra Museum of Modern Art, 311 Healesville-Yarra Glen Road, Healesville. (Melway: 276 J2). This is in conjunction with the 'FUTURE MEMORIALS' Exhibition.

Mick Woiwod will also discuss this new book at 2.00pm on Tuesday 26 November 2013 at the Lilydale Library in Anderson Street, Lilydale. You are welcome to attend this free event, but bookings are required on 9294 3120 or online at www.yourlibrary.com.au.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Our Society operates to preserve and further encourage interest in the valued history of our local area. As a small not for profit group our administrative functions and all of our activities are arranged by dedicated volunteers, some who have been involved for many years.

We value your support and want you to continue your connection with our Society. Our financial reserves are limited and we strive to keep our expenses as low as possible. We are not financially well placed to meet contingencies such as major failure of equipment and our operating costs steadily increase.

An important component of our income is from annual subscriptions, which are now due. It is desirable that they are paid promptly after the due date of 1st July and we don't like to feel we need to continually remind members.

Obviously late payments can be due to an oversight and we realise that it is easy to forget subscriptions. We appreciate members who have already paid theirs for this year and ask for prompt payment from others.

Please contact Jim Connor or Russell Yeoman if you wish to discuss any aspect of our operations, or if there is difficulty in paying your subscription.

AND ALSO

November is Local History Month at Yarra Plenty Regional Libraries.



Talks and other events will be held at all branches of the Library throughout the month. Details are available on the Library website. As well as our Shillinglaw Farm walk, Eltham Library will be conducting Cultural Nillumbik Bus Tours in Eltham on Thursdays 7th and 21st November and Saturdays 9th and 16th November, between 10.00am – 1.30pm. Bookings must be made through the Library on 9439 9266.

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Our regular Records Workshops continue to attract a good number of members but more are always welcome. At recent workshops we have been allocating specific projects to individual members with the idea that they can follow through with the one continuous project each time that they come. A project that can be taken up at any time by members who come occasionally is an audit of our equipment and records collections devised by Maureen Jones.

Workshop dates for the rest of this year are:

Monday 18th November - 9.30am
Tuesday 3rd December - 7.30pm

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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 are to receive a grant of \$600 for the 2013-2014 financial year, which will be applied towards the operating costs of our Local History Centre. We are grateful to the Council for its support.

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



Jim Connor
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