

# Newsletter

No. 214 January 2014



## New newsletter format

You may have noticed that the format of our newsletter looks different. This is a dramatic change to the front page layout that has been used for many years and has been undertaken to generally freshen up our newsletter, more effectively use the front page space (and save paper) and to make it more adaptable for email distribution.

We have endeavoured to continue to provide content that is easy to read for members and hope that you like the new look. Your feedback on these changes is always welcome.

## 2013 Eltham Festival

It is some years since our Society has been directly involved in the Eltham Festival. Following a generous offer of support from Eltham Rotary, the festival organisers, the committee decided that we would participate in the 2013 Eltham Festival. Many people attending this popular event on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2013 visited the EDHS display in the community arts precinct. There was much interest in the various early photographs on show, as well as aerial photos of the Eltham area of different eras. Our thanks to members who helped set up early on the Sunday morning and to those who generously assisted at times during the day.



EDHS display at the 2013 Eltham Festival

## The Grinding Wheel

Old grinding wheels that have been used over the years for sharpening various types of implements come in all shapes and sizes. For some time, we have been fortunate to have one on display in the rear yard at our Local History Centre, at 728 Main Road, Eltham, which is next to the former courthouse. Unfortunately, this wheel was damaged in recent months by persons unknown. Fortunately, through the determined efforts of Doug Orford this has now been repaired and is once again taking pride of place in the rear yard area. Our thanks to Doug for his excellent repair work.



The old grinding wheel

## Next Meeting

8.00 PM Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2014  
Eltham Senior Citizens' Centre  
Library Place, Eltham (Melway Map 21 ref J5)

## Heritage Excursion

2.00 PM Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2014

## February Meeting

Over the past year this Newsletter has reported on the progress of the project for digitisation of the Shire of Eltham Pioneers Photo Collection. This joint project of the Yarra Plenty Regional Library and our Society was funded by a State Government Local History grant. It involved the digitisation of the historic photo collection established by Eltham Shire Council in 1971 and held at the Eltham Library. Some of the images are shown below:



Selections from the Eltham Pioneers Photo Collection

The digitisation component of the project is complete and it is planned to make the pictures available on the internet with access through the YPRL website. Local History Librarian, Liz Pidgeon, has presented the Society with a set of DVDs containing the digital pictures, which total over four hundred items.

The agenda item for our February meeting will be a slide show of a selection of photos from this collection. Pictures will be selected for their visual interest or for the story that they tell. They will be a representative sample from the whole of the former Shire of Eltham, extending from Lower Plenty to Kinglake.

Commentary on the pictures will be provided by Russell Yeoman and other members. Russell has been involved with the collection since its inception. It is expected that the slide show will inspire comment from members on the images, or more broadly on their subject matter.

As at all of our meetings, new members and visitors are most welcome.

## Book Launch – A History of Saint Margaret’s Church Eltham

On Sunday February 23<sup>rd</sup> between 3pm and 5pm there will be the launch of a new book on the history of Saint Margaret’s Church, Eltham by Dr Geoffrey A Sandy, Author, Parish Historian and Parish Archivist.

This is Volume 1, covering the period from the beginnings to 1888. Bishop James Grant, Patron of the Anglican Historical Society and Jim Connor, President of the Eltham District Historical Society will undertake the launch, which will be held in the Mud Brick Hall, at 79-81 Pitt Street Eltham. Parking is available in the hotel across the road or on Pitt Street.



Saint Margaret’s Church Eltham

Everyone is cordially invited to attend and refreshments will be served. The book will be available for purchase at \$29.95 and Dr Sandy will be pleased to sign any copy purchased. Please contact the Parish Office by email [parishoffice@stmargaretseltham.org.au](mailto:parishoffice@stmargaretseltham.org.au) or phone 9439 9238 to give your RSVP by 16<sup>th</sup> February, for catering purposes.

## 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 8.00 pm on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2014 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 2013 Annual General Meeting
3. Reports
  - a. President's Report
  - b. Financial 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 3 and not more than 6)
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

Annual  
General  
Meeting

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.

We encourage you to think about contributing to the operation of our Society by becoming an office bearer or committee member, as we welcome fresh ideas and input. Please give the matter some consideration and, if in doubt, discuss it with one of our office bearers. The workload is not great and there are usually just six committee meetings each year, alternating with our general meetings.

## 2014 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. We look forward to you being involved in our various activities during 2014. Any changes during the year will be notified in the Newsletter.

Members are encouraged to come along to our records workshops to assist with getting our records into systematic order. A growing group of members continue to make progress on this and other tasks associated with the operation of our Society.

The workshops are held on the first Tuesday (evenings) and third Monday (mornings) of most months. Dates are listed in the program, with the 2014 workshops commencing on Tuesday 4<sup>h</sup> February.

On 30<sup>th</sup> June 1915 the Evelyn Observer and Bourke Record started advertising for details of local and district men who had enlisted for service in World War One. This request continued throughout 1916 for the districts of:

|                |                 |                       |            |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|------------|
| Arthur's Creek | Kangaroo Ground | Queenstown            | Whittlesea |
| Eltham         | Kinglake        | Research              | Wonga Park |
| Hurstbridge    | Panton Hill     | Yarra Glen & District |            |

On 16<sup>th</sup> November 1917 The Eltham and Whittlesea Shires Advertiser and Diamond Creek Advocate ran an article stating that the State School Patriotic Fund held a function at Research State School on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1917, to unveil the local Honour Board and it was a pronounced success. The Board itself was described as a beautiful piece of work in blackwood and was worthy of the 20 whose names were inscribed there on in gold lettering. Names of the servicemen listed on the board were as follows: *(Those listed with the serviceman's full name have been identified and those with initials only have not.)*

|                           |                                                        |                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| A.W. Brown                | Robert Meadows (served under alias of Allen Cassell) + |                          |
| William Rogerson Bell     | John Charlton Bell +                                   | Richard Oliver Bettison  |
| Henry James Reginald Cole | Thomas Herbert Clow                                    | Alfred Cassell +         |
| T. Cameron                | W. Davies                                              | Walter James Moseley +   |
| Arthur Henry Meadows      | Ivor Roy McLachlan                                     | Charles Frederick McBain |
| Henry Albert Norman +     | Fredrick John Orford                                   | William Jonas Prior +    |
| Thomas Scarce             | Wilson Begg Thomas                                     | Benjamin Francis West    |

+ Denotes those who died during the war.

Unfortunately, in hindsight the raising of an Honour Board a year prior to a conflict concluding was not a wise move, as the names of a further four people who served have been discovered, but these are not listed. They are as follows:

|                            |                      |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| William John Cameron       | John Powell          |
| Wilfred Leonard Cartwright | William Charles Cook |

As boundaries of districts have changed over time and some servicemen have provided the nearest town for attestation it has often been difficult to confirm the member's relationship with Research.

Research State School has had two major fires during its life, the first being on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1953. On this occasion as the fire station was located just across the road from the school the brigade were promptly on the scene and managed to save a substantial portion of the single roomed schoolhouse, from what otherwise would have been total destruction. Then on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1976 the old school at Research burnt to the ground in a fierce and rapid fire. The fire brigade, although quickly on the scene, were powerless to do anything more than prevent the spread of flames to other classrooms.



Old Research State School

Former pupils and staff who have had a long association with the school do not know what happened to the board. It would appear that the Honour Board was lost in one of the two fires. It is hoped that this valuable piece of history can be replaced in the not too distant future.

*Our thanks to Jim Allen for his detailed investigations regarding this missing Honour Board.*

*Maureen Jones is researching the history of Montmorency farm and its development into the suburb of Montmorency. This is one of the many stories that she has discovered. Maureen will speak more generally about the Montmorency Story at our July meeting.*

In 1847 William Seaville took over the tenancy of the 925 acre Montmorency farm owned by James Donnithorne, a retired judge of the Honourable East India Company. The property was managed by land agent James Graham. William Seaville had married Mary Ann Woods in 1843 and they had already begun their family, which was to grow in number to ten, three boys and seven girls.

William and Mary Ann farmed the property for about ten years. Crops were grown on the river flats, timber was harvested for firewood for the Melbourne market as well as for the post and rail fences which the tenant was expected to erect as part of the tenancy agreement. There is no record of their livestock.

In 1856 James Graham, through his company advertised the farm for lease. He was now representing Eliza Donnithorne who had inherited the property on the death of her father Judge Donnithorne.

**To Let.** *The excellent Farm of 925 acres known as Mount Morenzie presently occupied by Mr. William Seaville, twelve miles from town, and separated from the township of Eltham by a Government road. Entry on the 12<sup>th</sup> April. Apply to Graham, Lamb and Co., 91 Little Collins street east.*

Using birth indexes it is possible to trace the Seaville family's movements. William and Mary Ann's first two children were registered at Heidelberg, then the next seven were registered at Plenty, Lower Plenty or Plenty Bridge and the last child at Sandhurst (Bendigo).

In 1857 William purchased part of the property of Patrick Turnbull, the original Portion II of the Parish of Nillumbik adjoining the Montmorency Estate, which was Portion III. The other part of Portion II was sold to John "Heidelberg" Brown. An advertisement in 1859 regarding the toll bridge on the Lower Plenty advised that *for conditions of lease and a statement of receipts for the previous three months, apply to William Seaville, Lower Plenty Bridge.* However, it appears that he only farmed on the Turnbull land for four years, because on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1861 he applied for a Publican's Licence in Sandhurst (Bendigo).

By 1863 William and Mary were living at Sandhurst where their last child was born. Again in 1867 an Application for a Publican's Licence to the Bench of Magistrates at Sandhurst in the Colony of Victoria was reported in the Bendigo paper:

*I, William Seaville now residing at Sandhurst in the Colony of Victoria Do Hereby give Notice that it is my intention to apply to the Justices sitting in the Court of Petty Sessions to be holden [held] at the Town Hall, Sandhurst, on the 27<sup>th</sup> day of February 1867 for a certificate authorising the issue of a Publican's Licence for the said William Seaville for a house situated in Mitchell Street, Sandhurst aforesaid; that the said house contains two sitting rooms and six bedrooms, exclusive of those required for the use of my family, that I now rent and occupy the said house, that the said house is not licensed and is to be known by the sign of the "Terminus Hotel".*

Two years later he was in the Insolvency Court! William and Mary Ann remained in Bendigo for the rest of their lives and are buried in the Bendigo cemetery. Two of their sons however ventured further afield. Peter Kearney Seaville, born during their time on the Montmorency farm was droving cattle.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1880 the Wilcannia Times reported that 300 fat cattle from Momba “passed” for Adelaide and that Mr. Seaville was in charge. At that time Momba was the largest station in New South Wales, situated 140 km from Wilcannia.



Momba Homestead 1870



Wilcannia River Bank 1886

Then, following in his father’s footsteps, he appeared as the licensee of the Nine Mile Hotel named because of its situation nine miles from Wilcannia.

*Fire in Wilcannia Thursday March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1886*

*Late on Tuesday night fire broke out at the Nine-miles Hotel, owned by Mr. P.K. Seaville. It was caused by a kerosene lamp exploding. The place was burned to the ground and nothing was saved with the exception of one box. The landlord, Mr. Cresswell lost everything.*

Peter was also recorded as being the licensee of the Mt. Murchison Hotel, in close proximity to the Nine Mile. He also had his experience of insolvency. On 13<sup>th</sup> February 1886 Peter K. Seaville, of Wilcannia late publican, was declared insolvent - Liabilities £2295.7.4d Assets £1712.8s. Peter Kearney Seaville died at Prahran in 1887 aged 38 years.

Peter’s brother, William also headed for outback New South Wales. In 1882 an inquest was held into the death of William at Milparinka, in the Corner Country of far west New South Wales. He died there of inflammation of the lungs aged about 44 years and with property to the value of £57.

Seaville’s Tank, a public watering place for drovers on route from Wilcannia to Hungerford, is still in use today. Both men ventured a very long way from the Montmorency farm where as boys they spent their early years.

## **Incorporation Matters**

In the November 2013 Newsletter notice was given of a proposed Special General Meeting as part of our February meeting. The purpose was to be to consider and decide upon any changes to the Society’s rules following on the introduction of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012. This Act does not require a change to the rules, but does require a changed format for financial reporting to the Annual General Meeting.

It is considered appropriate to review the Society’s Rules and Statement of Purposes in the light of the new Act, but this is best done by consideration by the Committee before putting recommendations to a Special General Meeting.

Accordingly, this Special General Meeting will be adjourned to be held in conjunction with one of the regular meetings later this year.

## A Plea from Harry Gilham

*'I have an unfinished tale to tell.....'*

To start...where were you on the Friday evening or Saturday morning of August 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> 2013?

Why this question? Well, read on through this account to find out....and then, hopefully, you can help to fill in the blanks.

A weathered headstone, broken into three parts, was discovered that August night in a soggy cardboard box leant against the main entry to Eltham Cemetery in Mount Pleasant Road, Eltham.

The headstone belonged to the 1876 burial of Peter Lawlor – no – not the Eureka Peter Lalor and possibly not even the Peter Lawlor who was the first Police Officer at the Eltham Police Station from 1857 to 1872, but maybe even another Peter Lawlor of, at the moment, an unknown background.....or does the headstone belong to the policeman?

From the headstone we do know that his children were Michael, Margaret, Maud and Edith.

The Inscription reads:

**Peter Lawlor**  
**Who died February 12<sup>th</sup> 1876**  
**Aged 55 years**  
**Also his children**  
**Michael**  
**Margaret**  
**Maud**  
**and Edith**



The maintenance staff at the cemetery carefully removed the dark green fungus to show those details. As you now walk past Site 22 in the cemetery you will notice that a bluestone base remains with a centre grooved indent, retaining most of the bottom edge of the headstone. The three recovered parts have been attached to a heavy wooden board and lie on the grave at site 22.

During the 1960's to early 1980's a list of all the headstone inscriptions in the Eltham Cemetery was compiled by 'someone'. This Peter Lawlor headstone was not included in this list. From this omission we can assume that it had been taken/borrowed prior to compilation of the list.

Research by the Cemetery Trust Secretary, Rita Wooley using their records found the following information about this Peter Lawlor family:

1. Peter Lawlor purchased the Catholic Church site Number 22 for £1 on March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1862. (This site is beside the Sweeney and Murray family graves).
2. Margaret was the first of his children buried in Eltham on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1862, aged one year.
3. The second child buried was Maud Kate who was buried on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1869, aged 11 days.
4. There is no record of the burial of his other children, Michael and Edith nor his wife (name unknown).

However, from the free offerings from [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) the following information was recently obtained, but needs further confirmation and consideration.

- The Peter Lawlor who died aged 55 in 1876 has a middle name of Paul and his parents were Daniel Lawlor and Bridget Mulhall.

- The son Michael Lawlor was Jeremiah Michael Lawlor who died in 1860 and whose parents were Peter and Kate (no surnames given)
- Margaret Sarah Lawlor who died in 1862, has parents listed as Peter Lawlor and Catherine Ledwedge.
- Maude Kate Lawlor who died in 1869, has parents listed as Peter Lawlor and Catherine Ledwedge.
- Edith Beatrice Lawlor who died in 1873 age 1, has parents listed as Peter and Kate.

The final bit of the confusion or is it the confirmation that the headstone is of the policeman and his family, is that the Eltham Primary School records list two children of Peter Lawlor (the policeman). The oldest is Albert Ledwedge Lawlor who joined the school aged 4 years in July 1866 and Peter Vincent de Paul Lawlor who joined the school aged 5 years 1 month in February 1869. Both left in March 1872.

The mystery is why or how did the headstone leave the cemetery and why or how or even by whom, did it return? Someone must know something! Any clues to the mystery are better than nothing.

*The Eltham District Historical Society keeps records of early Eltham people and any additions are welcome. If you know anything about this Peter Lawlor and his family please contact anyone below. If needed, the sources of information can be anonymous by using the Post Office Box.*

Contacts:

Eltham District Historical Society – Post Office Box 137, Eltham 3095 or [edhs1@bigpond.com](mailto:edhs1@bigpond.com)  
President – Jim Connor 9439 5916 Past President – Harry Gilham 9439 1175  
Eltham Cemetery Trust Secretary – Rita Wooley 9432 1963

*We appreciate the significant research undertaken by Harry Gilham on the history of the Eltham Cemetery, as well as on various other subjects. Each year Harry takes one of our Heritage Excursions around the cemetery – the next date is Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2014.*

### **And Also**

We are pleased to welcome Alan Butler as a member of our committee. He has filled the position vacated by Gabrielle Turner, who has moved from Eltham to the Lilydale district. We appreciate that Alan will also act as assistant secretary to support Russell Yeoman.

### **Contacts for the Eltham District Historical Society**

- Jim Connor, President – Telephone 9439 5916
- Russell Yeoman, Secretary – Telephone 9439 9717
- David Johns, Treasurer / Membership Secretary – Telephone 9434 3357

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appreciates the financial support provided by the  
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