



The Eltham Racing Club

The first meeting of the Eltham Racing Club was at the Eltham Racecourse in Eltham Park (now known as Eltham Lower Park) on 21 January 1888.

The Evelyn Observer and East Bourke Record recounts that the day was eventful..., with a big crowd as well as large numbers of bookmakers 'who kicked up an infernal din plying their calling.' The reporter writes that 'games of all sorts were to the fore' and wryly observes that 'the swindling fraternity had quite a harvest.'

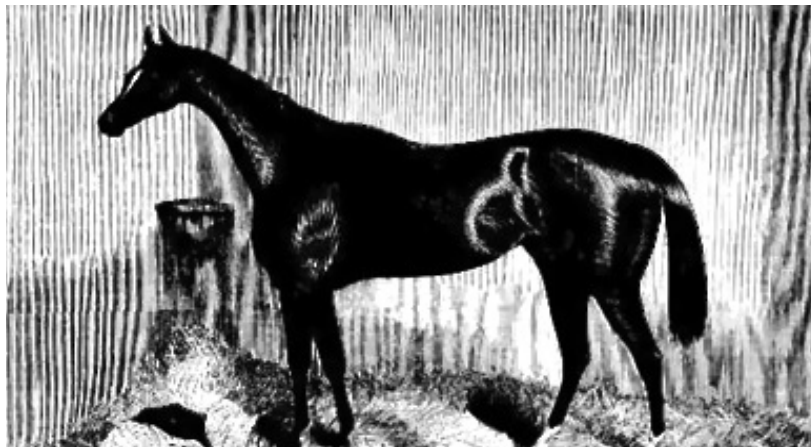


Image: Australian Town and Country Journal Saturday 20 June 1874, page 21

There was consternation when just before the hurdle race it was discovered that 'the ropes securing the various hurdles had been cut by some unprincipled rogue'. After the ropes were re-tied, officials found that the trickster had cut them a second time. 'It is to be regretted that he was not caught in the act.'

The main event of the day was the Eltham Handicap, a race of 'about one mile and a half' with only eight out of twenty horses actually running the race. 'The pace was warm from the start' but some of the horses and their riders lacked racing experience. The reporter tells us that 'In the home run Zodiac was leading, with Lizzie second, when Briar made a dart from the body and shot to the front, and would have secured a popular win had she not got the wrong side of the winning post.'

With Briar disqualified, the Eltham Handicap was won by Zodiac, with Lizzie in second place followed by Doubtful Jack.

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Next Meeting

8.00pm Wednesday 8th July 2015

Eltham Senior Citizens' Centre

Library Place, Eltham (Melway Map 21 ref J5)

Heritage Excursion

The Montmorency Farm

2.00pm Saturday 4th July 2015

See further details on page 2

July Meeting

The presentation by Mike Ridley at our meeting at 8.00pm on Wednesday 8th July 2015, at the Eltham Senior Citizens' Centre in Library Place, Eltham is titled 'Gulf Station'.

Mike will speak about the first assisted migrant ship to arrive from Scotland which carried, amongst others, the Bell family - the builders of Gulf Station. He will mention their first settlement in Kangaroo Ground, how one of their sons William started Gulf Station and the family who kept it going for nearly 100 years. In more modern times Gulf Station was sold to Smedley's, a bookmaker, and then to the State Government. Now the National Trust manages the farm.



During the presentation Mike will also discuss the animals kept on the farm, construction of the house and out buildings, as well as the future of Gulf Station.

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

July Excursion - Montmorency - the farm on the Plenty

For some years now Maureen Jones has been researching the history of Montmorency Farm and its transformation into the present day suburb of Montmorency. The story begins with Stuart Donaldson's 1840 purchase of 925 acres of Crown land extending from the Plenty River to the western boundary of the future Eltham township. The farm remained largely intact until some years after the railway was constructed through it in 1901. Maureen's book on this subject is expected to be released later this year.

For our excursion on 4th July we intend to walk along the full length of the western boundary of the former farm from south to north. We will mainly be following paths along the Plenty River. Near Sims Road there is the opportunity to visit the location of the former farm homestead. No former farm features remain but Maureen will provide commentary on the farm and its people as we go.



Montmorency, Sims Road - seed nursery c1965



Looking across to poultry sheds and Para Road shops c1967

This walk is about 2.5 km in length and will take 2 to 2.5 hours. It will start at 2pm at Palara Court, Montmorency. (Melway ref.21 B6). Please note that this is a one way walk finishing near Greensborough railway station. Participants can return to the start on the 901 bus (bring your Myki card), by walking independently or by arranging some other means of transport.

This free walk is open to the general public as well as Society members. Dogs are not permitted on Society excursions. The phone number for contact on the day is 0409 021 063.

Building and Completion of Saint Margaret's Church 1860-2014 by Geoff Sandy

On the 25 May 1860 a Public Meeting was held at the Fountain of Friendship Hotel, which was located on the corner of Maria and Pitt Streets, Eltham. The meeting confirmed the need to build a Church of England for Eltham. A Church Committee was formed to oversee its construction. At this time Church of England services were held in a 'temporary church' which was a building leased from Thomas Hunniford who was a parishioner and committee member.

Henry Dendy was elected Chairperson of the Church Committee. It decided to build the Church on land donated by Dendy rather than the Crown Reserve Land set aside for that purpose. The reason for the decision was that land at the corner of Bolton and Dalton streets was too remote from the centre of population. The Pitt Street site was preferred as being central to Little Eltham.

The Architect of the Church was Nathaniel Billing and the Builder was George Stebbing. The cost of construction was £1126. The Church that was built was smaller than that envisaged by Billing and the Committee. The reason was insufficient funds. Saint Margaret's opened for Divine Service 12 December 1861. The Church envisaged by Billing is shown as *Photograph 1*.

The smaller Church was built with a temporary north wall which would allow the Church to be completed according to Billing's original design. It was removed in 2014 after 153 years.

The smaller Church as it was in 2011 is shown as *Photograph 2*. Since 1861 there have been many discussions and plans prepared to complete the Church.

Generally lack of funds has acted as the main constraint which has prevented this. In the 1960s, for instance, plans were prepared to complete the Church. Around this time serious discussion was undertaken to demolish the 1861 Church and Gibson Hall.

An integrated building comprising a new Church and Hall was envisaged. From a heritage view it was fortunate this was not undertaken.

During the 1980s the 1861 Church was unable to accommodate the growing congregation and was inflexible in its ability to accommodate modern liturgical requirements. Again nothing eventuated mainly because of a shortage of funds.

(continued on page 4)

Eltham District Historical Society



Photograph 1 - The original Church design by Nathaniel Billing



Photograph 2 - The smaller Church as built 1861 - 2014

Building and Completion of Saint Margaret's Church 1860-2014 by Geoff Sandy (continued from page 3)

The Property Committee Report of the 2006 Annual General Meeting of Saint Margaret's indicated that a meeting of interested parties to address development of the Pitt Street Site had been held earlier in the year. It stated that any development options under consideration would be significantly impacted if Saint Faith's Montmorency amalgamated with Saint Margaret's Eltham.

Indeed this proved to be the case. Saint Faiths amalgamated with Saint Margaret's and the land and property of the former were sold. The Diocese provided \$1.25 million for expansion and for the upgrade of Eltham's Church facilities. In November 2007 the Vestry (which is now referred to as Parish Council) established a Redevelopment Committee. The membership consisted of Roger Alcock, David Pryor, Revd. Elizabeth Delbridge, Graham Carew, Derrick Hitchins, Barry Morrison, Richard Petty, Sally Petty, Geoff Sandy and Harry Watson. Paul Wiesmeyer was chairperson for a short while then for most of the project's duration John Winkett served in that role.

David and Jacqui Wagner of Atelier Wagner were appointed to perform a feasibility study. Then they were appointed to progress the project to the design and development stage. After considerable debate, discussion and compromise concerning the design the Redevelopment Committee recommended to Vestry that the 'temporary north wall' be demolished and a new worship space be integrated with the heritage 1861 Church according to the accepted design.

The successful tender for building the Church was Conrad Construction and Management Pty. Ltd. Supervision of the construction was by Kris and Clark Frigo. Construction began in February 2014.

On the 30 November 2014 the first service was conducted in the new worship space. An external view of the completed building in 2014 is shown as *Photograph 3*.

On Saturday 9 May 2015 Bishop Philip Huggins consecrated Saint Margaret's Anglican Church together with its religious objects, and, dedicated the refurbished Mud Brick Hall (now referred to as the Multi-Function Centre).

The combined 1861 Church and the new worship space is shown as *Photograph 4*. The 1861 Church was consecrated on Tuesday 16 May 1876 by Bishop Samuel Thornton. In Anglican tradition a Church can only be consecrated when it is free of debt.

*Geoff Sandy is the Parish Archivist
and Parish Historian at Saint Margaret's
Anglican Parish, Eltham*



Photograph 3 - Church extension
David Wagner (Architect), Jacqui Wagner (Architect) and Chris Frigo (Builder)



Photograph 4 - New Worship Space 2014

Miss Bessie Wingrove - that Queer Creature Called a Land Lover by Maureen Jones

In 1946 Bessie Wingrove wrote to the Minister for Education protesting in no uncertain terms that the Education department had behaved abominably when they proceeded to take over her paddock to extend the school grounds of the Dalton Street State School.

She stated that half of her field was under negotiations already for that purpose, but it seemed that the Department had set its eyes on more land than she was willing to relinquish.

The local Board “offered” her property for sale presumably to the Department without consulting Bessie. This act she described to the Minister as treachery and discourtesy. She wrote “to grab my whole paddock would be a monstrous act of unmitigated tyranny. You cannot – you must not condone such action.” She reminded the Minister that the legislators who had delegated arbitrary powers to the Department expressly stipulated they should be necessary and without detriment to the victim. With great irony she described herself as a “queer creature called a land lover.”ⁱ So who was this feisty woman taking on the Department of Education?

Bessie Wingrove was born in 1870 in Eltham, the fourth daughter and sixth child of Charles Symons Wingrove and Katherine Rose Nodin.ⁱⁱ Charles Wingrove was the Shire of Eltham Secretary for more than four decades and during that time also acted as Engineer for the Shire of Eltham as well as for eight years at the Heidelberg Shire.

Of the ten children born to Charles and Katherine two of Bessie’s younger siblings, Henry Vivian and Isabella Margaret, died as infants. Bessie, along with three sisters and four brothers attended Eltham State School which adjoined the family property on Main Road, Eltham consisting of 15 acres and known as the Glen. This area was a favourite camping ground for the aboriginal peoples. Here Charles had built a house of handmade bricks, slate roof and a return veranda. He planted cypress trees, fruit and nut trees. The garden had formal brick paths lined with daffodils and lilies. He added extensions to house his growing family and would later construct a building in which to hold Council meetings. A dairy, stables, barn and summer house were added over the years.ⁱⁱⁱ



An early photograph of Wingrove Cottage, 672-674 Main Road, Eltham

Bessie left Eltham State School in 1884 and attended East Leigh, a private girls’ school in Prahran. She sat for the matriculation examination for Melbourne University which took place in October 1887. The results were notified in January 1888 and Bessie was successful.

Following her successful Arts degree she went on to gain her Master of Arts, Melbourne University. She was a boarder at Trinity Girls Hostel and the Australasian of 13th May 1899 reported that a few of the old girls of Trinity Hostel gave a farewell dinner to Miss Nora Beatrice Parsons at the Grand Hotel. Among the guests were the Misses Traill, Miss Helen Sexton, and Miss Bessie Wingrove.^{iv} After obtaining Honours in the Theory and Practice of Education, Bessie began her career as a teacher, and the Electoral Rolls show that while teaching she lived in Prahran.^v *(continued on page 6)*

Miss Bessie Wingrove - that Queer Creature Called a Land Lover by Maureen Jones (continued from page 5)

By 1903 her father Charles Wingrove was living at Eltham with his wife Katherine, son Walter, a clerk, and daughters Lucy and Caroline. In 1905 Charles died leaving the home and property to his wife Katherine. Within two years Katherine died and left the property to Caroline. From 1909 to 1916 just Caroline and Walter lived at Eltham. For a brief period in 1917, Robert Lindsay, Caroline and Walter's brother, came back to live at Eltham after the death of his young wife Annie May. Bessie continued to live at Prahran until 1928 when she sailed for Europe.

On the 11th August 1928 the Australasian reported "*that Miss E.M. (Elsie Margaret) Traill is leaving by the Orvietto with Miss Bessie Wingrove and after visiting Palestine the travellers will travel to Italy where they hope to meet Dr. Helen Sexton and their later plans are uncertain. Miss Traill will be much missed in many circles and especially by the newspaper and magazine committee of the Victorian League on which she has done such splendid work and of which she has been honorary secretary. In order to enable her fellow workers on the committee to wish her au revoir and bon voyage the chairwoman (Mrs. Rupert Greene) gave a delightful luncheon party last Monday.*"^{vi} Jessie Traill was already in Yugoslavia on an eight month painting tour, having become by then a renowned artist.

Elsie Traill was an accomplished craftswoman and woodcarver. Her work forms part of the interior of St. Agnes' Anglican Church in Black Rock. Elsie was also a philanthropist. She donated £5,000 to the foundation of the Janet Clarke Hall at Melbourne University, a successor to the Trinity Girls Hostel. She would continue to work for charitable organizations such as the Red Cross.

Dr. Helen Sexton M.B., Ch.B., was one of the first graduates of Melbourne University Medical School in 1892. In 1910 she resigned from her position at the Women's Hospital and went to Europe in 1912. Soon after the outbreak of World War 1 though then over fifty years of age Dr. Sexton established a small field hospital in France, the gift of herself and other women doctors, and she served in the French Army with the rank of Major. In 1917 she returned to Australia, but left again for England two years later and retired from practice. During the last ten years of her life she was almost helpless with arthritis, as well as having lost total control of her voice. She died in London in 1950 in her 90th year.^{vii}

By 1931 Bessie Wingrove had returned to live with her brother Walter at the cottage in Eltham and was recorded as a tutor. Her cousin Lucy Maplestone joined them at Eltham where they kept a few cows milked by various neighbours, tended their garden and gave afternoon tea parties.

Doug Orford (Eltham District Historical Society member) remembers Miss Wingrove storming into the school room one day to complain bitterly about the school incinerator filling her garden with smoke, and no doubt casting a nasty odour through the washing. Bessie was very deaf and wore one of the very first hearing aids to be manufactured, a heavy cumbersome trumpet affair.

Bessie Wingrove died in 1955, having been predeceased by Lucy and Walter. She is buried in St. Catherine's Church of England cemetery in St. Helena along with most of her family. She had lived a long and interesting life at a time when women were fighting for equality in education and career choices. She had a career, travelled, moved in influential circles, had lifelong friends and enjoyed the fruits of the new era in women's education.

i E.D.H.S. Wingrove Family File

ii B.D.M.s Dept of Justice, Victoria

iii E.D.H.S. Wingrove Family File

vii Hutton Neve, M The Mad Folly – the History of Australia's Pioneer Doctors, Library of Australian History, Sydney, 1980

iv Trove – The Australasian 13.5.1899

v Ancestry Electoral Rolls

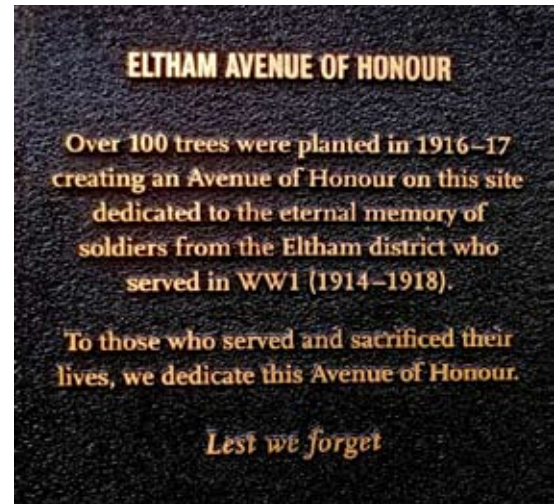
vi Trove – The Australasian 11.8.1928

On Tuesday 2nd June 2015 new markers for the Eltham Avenue of Honour were unveiled during an official ceremony at Wingrove Park. One of the markers is installed in Wingrove Park opposite Mount Pleasant Road with another located near the south - western corner of Main Road and Pitt Street, opposite the Eltham Hotel.

During the joint launch of these markers the Minister for Veterans, the Honourable John Eren and Councillor Helen Colman, Mayor of Nillumbik both mentioned the involvement of the Eltham District Historical Society in maintaining the history of the Avenue of Honour. Harry Gilham, our immediate past president, has been active over many years in documenting details of the men from the Eltham region involved in World War 1. Jim Allen, one of our committee members, has represented EDHS on Council's Memorial Advisory Committee involved with this project.

This Avenue of Honour was established in 1916 - 1917 with over 100 trees planted to commemorate those who went to this war from the Township of Eltham. The trees extended along Main Road between Mount Pleasant Road and Pitt Street.

Four students leaders from the Eltham Primary School contributed to the ceremony with their readings, poetry and acknowledgement of the forty students and one teacher from their school who fought in World War 1. They were also interested in a Welcome Home medal shown by Doug Orford, that was presented to his uncle, W.H. Orford to acknowledge his service during World War 1.



The Plaque on the new marker



Eltham Primary School Students with Doug Orford

Membership Subscriptions

Subscriptions for 2015 -16 are due on 1st July and we appreciate that some members have paid already. Last year we introduced the option of paying a 3 year membership, which has been popular so you may wish to take this option as it reduces the need to renew each year.

Details of current subscriptions are:

Single member	2015-16	\$25.00	3 year option	\$75.00
Newsletter	2015-16	\$15.00	3 Year option	\$45.00
Family	2015-16	\$30.00	3 Year option	\$90.00
Business organisation	2015-16	\$30.00	3 Year option	\$90.00

An invoice will soon be sent to all currently listed members, but your payment would be welcome to David Johns at our July meeting, or sent to the Society's post office box - P.O. Box 137 Eltham.



.....and also

It is good to see a significant number of members assisting at our records workshops, particularly the Monday morning sessions. If you would like to assist but cannot come on the specified dates then individual arrangements can be made for appropriate tasks and dates. There are some jobs that could be done at home. Talk to a Committee member if you are interested. Coming dates for our scheduled workshops at our Local History Centre are:

Mondays 9.30 am	20th July	17th August
Tuesdays 7.30 pm	7th July	4th August

Our Society often receives enquiries and we attempt to assist wherever we can, given our limited resources. Russell Yeoman recently responded to a local resident asking how to trace the history of their house and we thought this information might be of general interest. He said that tracing the history of a house is often a matter of piecing together information from various sources. Historical researchers rely a great deal on Council rate records and that a significant jump in a valuation often indicates the construction of a house. Old rate records for the Shire of Eltham are held at the Public Records Office in North Melbourne. Title information and old plans of subdivision are also useful.

We have received some very positive feedback about our new website and if you have not already viewed it you can go to www.elthamhistory.org.au. An recent enquiry to EDHS was a result of someone looking at our website and then contacting us by email asking for assistance. Their request was a little difficult to initially understand as the person was asking about their great, great grandfather and mother who had lived in Eltham and were thought to have been buried in the Eltham Parish Church. Further details indicated that their ancestor had moved to Eltham in 1827 and in 1851 he was recorded as being a farmer there.

Russell Yeoman replied advising that their email had come to the Eltham District Historical Society in Eltham, Victoria, Australia and that it appears to have been intended for the Eltham Society in Eltham, England. Due to our ongoing association with members of the Eltham Society he was able to assist by providing details as to who to contact there.

Correction - In our last newsletter (number 222) in the article titled 'The Tower of Remembrance - Kangaroo Ground Memorial Park' it was mentioned that in 1919 Harold McDonald's sister Ruby and her husband Robert White donated a section of their property to the then Shire of Eltham to create the Kangaroo Ground War Memorial Park. Most of the land for the Memorial Park was in fact purchased by the Shire of Eltham from the Mess family and an entry to this land was donated by Councillor White's mother, who was the adjacent neighbour.

Contacts for the Eltham District Historical Society

- Jim Connor, President – Telephone 0418 379 497
- Russell Yeoman, Secretary – Telephone 9439 9717
- David Johns, Treasurer / Membership Secretary – Telephone 9434 3357

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