

Newsletter



No. 225 November 2015

1970 in Retrospect

Jim Connor

In 1971 leading up to celebration of the centenary of the Shire of Eltham *The Diamond Valley News* summarised some of the headlines that made news in the Eltham and Diamond Valley shires during 1970. In doing so it mentioned that Eltham was beginning to look less like a provincial town and more like a blossoming township.

The article highlighted that the recent incredible growth rate also brought with it problems. Local residents put pressure on the State government about district schools and on both councils about various issues. At that time the combined shires of Eltham and Diamond Valley were considered to be in the top 10 fastest growing areas in the State.

Some of the activities reported on during 1970 included:

- Safeway decided to come to Eltham following an earlier move there by Woolworths.
- An ex-serviceman was fined \$400 in Eltham Court for mailing a pistol to himself from Vietnam.
- Greensborough racing driver Peter Brock won the first round of the rallycross championship.
- Lena Skipper, one of the Montsalvat Artists Colony originals died at the Austin Hospital, at the age of 82.
- Three men who went for a joy ride on a road rolling machine were fined a total of \$270 in Eltham Court.
- Eltham residents petitioned the Eltham Shire Council over the night time closure of the swimming pool and Council decided to spend \$2000 on lighting to keep the pool open at night.
- Diamond Valley residents protested to Council about the 'pan man' parking his trucks near their homes.
- World famous anthropologist Professor Donald Thomson died at his Eltham home.
- A site on the corner of Brougham and Susan Streets in Eltham was named as a possible location for a new sports centre.



Eltham Courthouse c1970

So, there have been many changes in the last 45 years, Woolworths now owns Safeways, the Eltham Court is closed, as has the old Eltham swimming pool, the 'new' Eltham Leisure Centre is just about to be extended and refurbished, the shires of Diamond Valley and Eltham no longer exist and sadly we have lost many more significant people from our community.

Next Meeting

8.00pm Wednesday 11th November 2015

Eltham Senior Citizens' Centre

Library Place, Eltham (Melway Map 21 ref J5)

Heritage Excursion

Panorama Heights Walk

2.00pm Saturday 7th November 2015

See further details on page 3

November Meeting - A Virtual Eltham Literary Tour

The topic for our November meeting is inspired by a literary tour of Eltham organised by the Eltham Library a few years ago.

Of course at a meeting we cannot actually visit sites associated with local writers but we will discuss their lives, writings and Eltham connections.

The starting point for this presentation was a long list of local writers, including many present day authors, with quite a few being members of our Society. To keep the presentation to a manageable length we will deal only with writers and literary figures who have passed away. The presentation by a panel of members will include a number of readings relevant to each of the subjects.

A particular feature will be the life and work of Alan Marshall who had a long association with Eltham and is our most famous and well known author. In 1971 he wrote *Pioneers and Painters One Hundred Years of Eltham and its Shire*. In the chapter *Educationalists and Writers* he writes: *"Writers came to Eltham for the same reason as did the painters: their neighbours had similar interests and the surroundings attracted them."* His stories about local writers have informed the preparation for this meeting.



Alan Marshall by Alan Martin
Nillumbik Shire Council Art Collection

This meeting will take place at 8.00 pm on Wednesday 11th November in the Eltham Senior Citizen's Centre, Library Place Eltham. New members and visitors are most welcome.

ANZAC Centenary interpretive signage

Nillumbik Shire Council has recently implemented the installation of interpretive signage at three sites throughout the municipality, as part of ANZAC Centenary projects to commemorate the contributions of those who served in the First World War, from each local area. These projects have been supported and funded by the Federal and State governments, as well as by the Nillumbik Shire Council.

Signage has been provided on low plinths at the Hurstbridge Memorial Park in Greys Harps Road, Hurstbridge, adjacent to the recently renovated Christmas Hills War Memorial and at the Kangaroo Ground Memorial Tower. Each installation carries its own community's spirit and stories based on historical information. Area identification signs have also been provided at the Eltham and Hurstbridge Avenues of Honour.



Interpretive signage plinth at Hurstbridge



Interpretive signage at Kangaroo Ground Memorial Tower

November Excursion - Panorama Heights Walk

In anticipation of the launch of Maureen Jones' book "*Montmorency The Farm on the Plenty*" our excursion in July this year was a walk along the Plenty River, which was the western boundary of the Montmorency Farm. Now to celebrate the launch of this book our November excursion will include some of the eastern part of the Montmorency Farm, as well as adjoining areas of the Panorama Heights Estate. This estate was the subject of our walk in November 2010 and although there will be some overlap this walk will mainly cover areas not previously visited.

The Panorama Heights Estate in Montmorency South is a residential area of winding streets lined with indigenous local trees and includes secluded parks and walkways. Prior to its subdivision in the 1920s this was Tom Orr's farm, a favourite painting place of the artist Walter Withers.

After it was subdivided by land developer John Quinn the sale of land and house building proceeded slowly. Much vacant land remained in the 1970s. This estate was unusual for its time, although to some extent it emulates the subdivision designs of Walter Burley Griffin, such as the heritage listed Glenard Estate in Heidelberg. It contains winding streets, irregularly shaped lots, secluded parks at the rear of lots and connecting walkways.



Pecks Dam

This former farm dam is a feature of this walk

This walk on **Saturday 7th November** will mostly not be one of historic buildings and the like although we will pass a group of heritage listed mud brick houses in Napier Crescent. Rather it will be a pleasant walk through informal streets and parks imagining the past landscape that inspired Walter Withers and looking at aspects of this unusual 1920s subdivision. On the way we will discover the elusive southern boundary of the Montmorency Farm where it crosses streets and parks.

This circuit walk is about 3.5 km in length and will take 2 to 2.5 hours. It will start at 2pm at the car park in Grand Boulevard opposite the Montmorency South School (Melway ref.21 E 7/8). It contains some hilly sections. 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.

Young History

Eltham District Historical Society has a long history of connecting with local community groups and schools. We have been pleased to recently host visits to our Local History Centre and the former Eltham Courthouse from the 1st Eltham Cubs, grade 3 classes from Eltham Primary School and grade 2 classes from Holy Trinity Primary School.

It is encouraging to see the interest shown in local history by teachers and our younger generations. Squeals of delight would also appear to indicate the children enjoy being 'locked up' in the lock up.



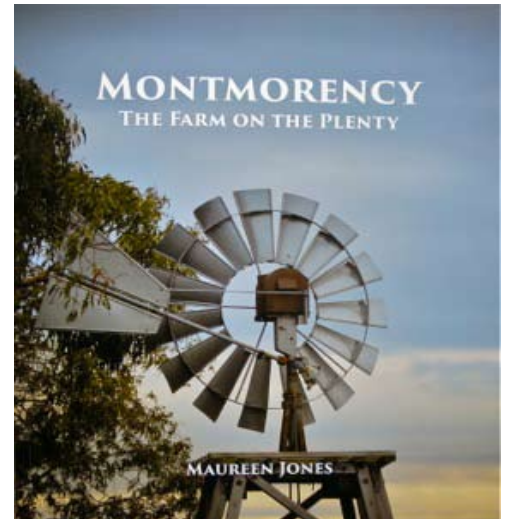
Grade 3 Eltham Primary School students at the lock up

Montmorenci, Mont Morenzie, Montmorency.....no matter how the name is spelt it still refers to the interesting suburb we know as Montmorency in Victoria, Australia. You realise when looking at the early history of the area that the fact one family held ownership for seventy years is a contributing factor to how Montmorency has developed.

Maureen Jones in her recently released book *'Montmorency – The Farm on the Plenty'* provides a detailed insight into this history, from when it was part of the territory of the Wurundjeri willam people, through changes of early ownership within the Donnithorne family and their tenant farmers to the eventual subdivision of the extensive Montmorency Estate.

In a beautifully presented book containing many related photographs Maureen takes us on a meandering journey across the land with the many involved characters, while gently holding a hand as this tale gradually envelopes the reader. This is a book that is long overdue; it is an enjoyable read and importantly a valuable resource as it documents so much significant local history, concentrating information from many scattered records and new sources. It enables anyone with even a slight interest in Montmorency to experience how we travelled to get to the place we know today.

'Montmorency – The Farm on the Plenty' is available at selected local outlets or direct from Maureen Jones, contact amjones7@bigpond.com or telephone 03 9439 1545.



Montmorency - The Farm on the Plenty

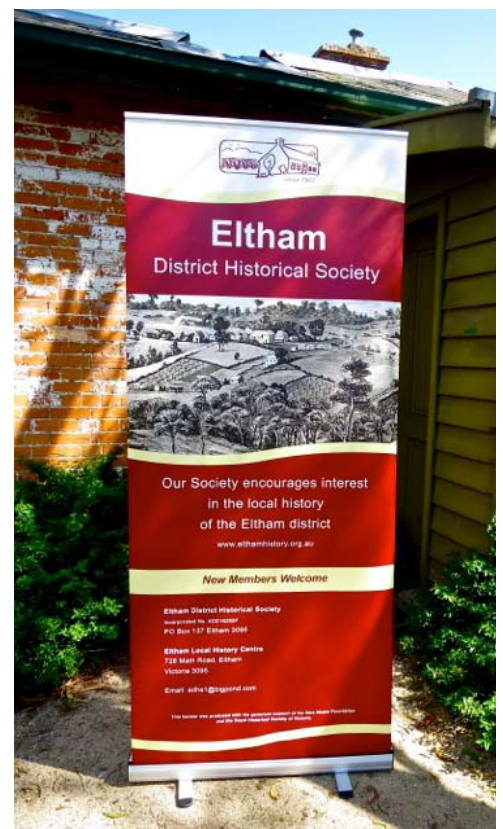
Our new banner and the Eltham Festival

As part of the History Week 2015 program arranged by the Royal Historical Society Victoria (RHSV) we were able to apply for provision of a roll up banner to promote and publicise the services of the Eltham District Historical Society.

Our success in being approved meant we could proceed with submitting a layout to their graphic designers. Our committee agreed with the draft design prepared by Jim Connor, which was then sent for production. We were pleased to recently receive the banner, through the generous support of the RHSV.

This has already been displayed at a talk about Early Eltham Pioneers at the Eltham Library on 20 October as part of the RHSV Local History Week and also YPRL Local History Month.

The banner will also be used at the Eltham Festival on Sunday 22 November at Alistair Knox Park in Eltham, when we will again have a marquee promoting our Society. We would appreciate assistance from members to look after the display during the day. Please advise Russell Yeoman if you are able to participate, so we can schedule a time to suit you. Members have enjoyed the experience in past years.



New EDHS banner

Diana Joan (Ding) Dyason (1919 – 1989) was born in Sandringham to Edward Clarence Dyason and Anne Elizabeth (McCLure). The record of her life has been well told and because of the kind of person that she was the accounts are informative and enjoyable. The eulogy of Rod Home¹ and the entry in the Australian Dictionary of Biography prepared by Monica MacCallum² spell out the milestones in Diana's life as well as the impressive academic career which culminated in the establishment and development of the History and Philosophy of Science department at the University of Melbourne. For me her own account of her growing up and the influences attending this proved to be most informative. Diana was one of the contributors to the Half-Open Door in which 16 Australian Women review their professional life and achievement

Diana grew up in a privileged household, privileged both in terms of affluence and upbringing. Her father Edward was a very successful businessman and while his original training was as a mining engineer, his interests in and involvement with Australian society were such that just before his death he had led the Australian delegation to the British Commonwealth Relations Conference in Ontario Canada. Edward was throughout his life a profound believer in the rationality of human beings and trust in this, along with the rigorous gathering of evidence to encourage rational thinking, became one of the basic tenets of Diana's life. Diana's growing up was a rich experience for her, albeit coupled with a difficult relationship with her mother. While her mother like her father was a free spirit, the mother's neglect of her upbringing meant she developed a strong sense of independence. This meant that she was influenced by a variety of people who showed her great affection, promoted her interest in nature and adventure and left her in no doubt that she could achieve whatever she put her mind to. Such confidence was called for considering the path that Diana chose to follow through her life.



Diana Dyason
from Half-Open Door

Many of her father's friends were academics from Melbourne University. Diana had the good fortune to be influenced by Miss K.A. Gilman-Jones (Jonah) at Melbourne Church of England Girls Grammar School so she saw it as quite normal that she should pursue an academic career in the field of biological science. Even though she pursued a career in science hers was never a one sided education. The family library was extensive and all through school life she had special permission to bring from home whatever books she wanted to from the family library.

Diana had the good fortune to begin her post graduate studies under the influence of R.D. (Pansy) Wright in the Physiology department. He taught a physiology class in her final year, the first time that physiology had been taught to science students. His approach, its directness and the freedom he gave to students in their work appealed to Diana. Wright encouraged her to pursue her interest in the history of science. At the time, the medical fraternity had developed its history of the evolution of diseases but without the rigor of evidence, which was growing in the sciences. There was a need to bring this to medical history. At the same time social sciences were beginning to come to the fore and again there was the concern that these sciences be based on proper evidence. Diana's interest in the history of science and her respect for the scientific method led the founding of the department of the History and Philosophy of Science. She continued to be the leader in this discipline in Australia for the rest of her life.

We do not know definitely when Diana came to Research. It is believed that she lived in the district for about 30 years before her death in 1989. We are indebted to Shirley White who was her house keeper for some years. It seems that Diana's mother had lived in the house, which was originally on 30 acres and situated in an area behind the present day Ballara Receptions.

Diana supported the CFA and local businesses. She enjoyed her retirement and enlarged her home after her mother's death to house her extensive library. Diana enjoyed life and often hosted local and university friends with kindness and lively conversation.

- References
1. Eloge: Diana Joan Dyason, 1919 – 1989, R. Home, *Metascience* 1990; 8(1): 6-10
 2. Dyason, Diana Joan (Ding) (1919 – 1989) Monica MacCallum, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, volume 17, Melbourne University Press, pp 347-348
 3. Preludes ch. 15, *The Half Open Door*, Patricia Grimshaw, Lynne Strahan Eds., Hale & Iremonger, 1982.

Our Christmas Function

This year our Christmas function will be held from 6.30pm on Wednesday 9th December 2015 in the Eltham Courthouse annexe, entered up the ramp from the rear car park at our Local History Centre. All members are most welcome to attend. As in the past, our Society will provide some 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. Please contact Sue on 9439 9520 if in doubt about what to bring.



There is no formal agenda but as for the last few years Jim Connor will screen some local historical photographs and pictures from his own collection. We again look forward to a fun evening shared with friends.

...and also

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 16th November	-	9.30am
Tuesday 1st December	-	7.30pm

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 have received a grant of \$600 for the 2015-2016 financial year, which will be applied towards the operating costs of our Local History Centre. We are grateful to the Council for its support.

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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