

Newsletter

No. 228 June 2016



‘Shoestring’

Jim Connor

What is in a name and why call a house ‘Shoestring’....was built or bought on a shoestring?

‘Shoestring’ is the name of a historically significant house at 31 Metery Road, Eltham bordering the Eltham Primary School. It was a small Victorian cottage when built about 1859, which was extended with recorded additions in 1883, 1887 and 1921. There have been later additions and alterations as the property passed through various owners, some who are notable in the history of Eltham.

It has been the residence of several prominent local figures: David Clark who was the first headmaster of Eltham Primary School in Dalton Street (1875) and of the previous 1856 National vested school on that site, lived there until his death in 1912. John Lascelles Drew, manager of Yanakie Tea Gardens lived at ‘Shoestring’ during the World War I period and Arthur Munday, a solicitor who became a builder and was very involved with Montsalvat, lived there in the early 1940s. The handsome and debonair Arthur became the lover of Sonia Skipper and they had a daughter Saskia Skipper.



‘Shoestring’ name plate
photograph: Jim Connor

Joy Jobbins who was raised in Sydney and worked in various roles in the advertising and fashion industries moved to Eltham after she married Harry Jobbins. They initially lived at ‘Stanhope’ in Stanhope Street, Eltham then at Lenister Farm in Eltham South before buying this cottage from Arthur Munday. Joy named it ‘Shoestring’ as she said “that’s what we were buying it on, but the lifestyle they enjoyed at the time was rich in friendship, fun and folly”. She then used ‘Shoestring’ as the title for her book released in 2007, which is described as being a memoir of Australian social history from her childhood in Bondi to the trials and tribulations of a working mother in a male dominated industry, including the rural bohemia of Eltham in the 1950s. They also extended the house.

During the years 1980 to about 1986 Judy and John Dixon owned ‘Shoestring’ and also undertook renovations, including having Gordon Ford landscape the property. Judy remembers an olive tree and an old well with a brick dome shaped top in the back garden and discovering finger prints in some of the mud brick walls, as well as pieces of broken crockery and even an old dental plate when digging in the garden. There were many parties during their time at the house.

While the property has had further changes in ownership, including in 1999 and 2007, thankfully the name ‘Shoestring’ has been retained.

Next Meeting

8.00pm Wednesday 8th June 2016

Senior Citizens’ Centre

Library Place, Eltham (Melway Map 21 ref J5)

Heritage Excursion

Back-track to Fitzsimons Lane, Eltham

2.00pm Saturday 2nd July 2016

See further details on page 2

Our Next Meeting – Wednesday 8th June

Shortly after the First World War Ivan Thompson, a pharmacist in Fairfield, expanded into the Diamond Valley by opening pharmacies at Eltham, Greensborough and Watsonia. A small item in the Hurstbridge Advertiser on 20th July 1928 states that *'Mr. Ivan J Thompson, well known chemist, has opened a branch at Eltham where all prescriptions will be dispensed.'*

In the early 1950's Norm Williams considered he was fortunate to be able to serve an apprenticeship with Ivan Thompson at his Eltham pharmacy. He was with the business when it moved in 1952 to the present site at 964 Main Road, Eltham, which was the first brick shop built in the Eltham Town Centre.

In 1958 Ivan Thompson decided to sell his pharmacies. Harry Brown and Norm Williams were able to purchase the Eltham business and they continued in partnership until Mr. Brown's death in 1971. By that time they had expanded with pharmacies in Fairfield and Lower Plenty.

At our June meeting Norm Williams will speak about how Thompsons Pharmacy developed, while continuing to supply a range of services for generations of Eltham families. His stories, supported by a collection of personal photographs, will entertain as well as give an insight into how the Eltham shopping centre has changed over the years.

As always, new members and visitors are most welcome to attend this meeting at 8.00pm on Wednesday 8th June 2016 in the Senior Citizens' Centre, Library Place, Eltham.

Heritage Excursion – Back-track walk to Fitzsimons Lane – Saturday 2nd July

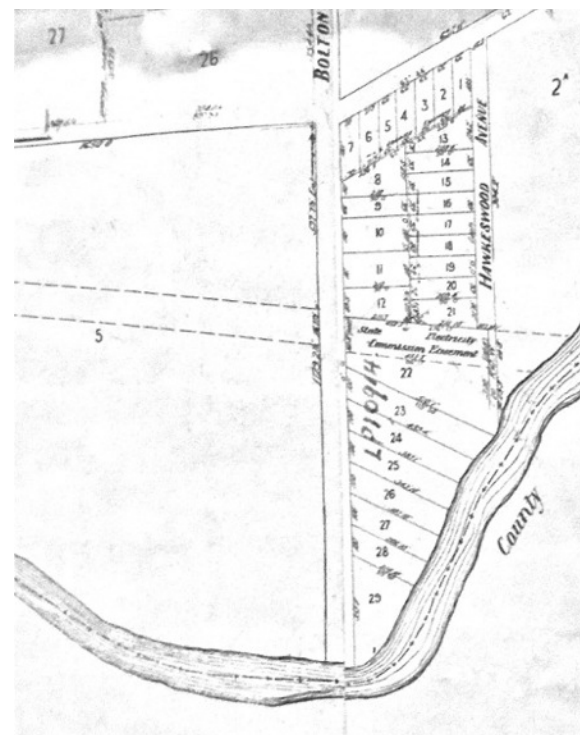
Our July heritage excursion will be a walk to Yarra Hill Close and Fitzsimons Lane Bridge, based on the story on pages 3 and 4.

Although the route is close to Fitzsimons Lane it will follow streets and paths that may not be familiar to many local residents. It will include commentary on the history of this corner of the Town of Eltham.

This walk on Saturday 2nd July will follow a "there and back" route, that is returning over much the same course. It is about 2.5 km in length and will take 2 to 2.5 hours. It includes some hills.

It will start at 2pm at the corner of Bolton Street and Old Eltham Road (Melway ref.21 F10).

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.



Part of an early map of the southern end of Bolton Street, Eltham showing a proposed subdivision - this is now the site of Fitzsimons Lane

Today residents of Eltham and beyond take it for granted that they cross the Yarra River at Fitzsimons Lane to travel to Templestowe and further on to southern and eastern suburbs. This route provides access to the Eastern Freeway to reach the city. It has not always been the case.

Prior to the building of the Fitzsimons Lane Bridge in 1961 there was no road crossing of the river between Banksia Street Heidelberg and Warrandyte. An early bridge at Bonds Road Lower Plenty was swept away in the flood of 1863. Dorita Thomson has told that her husband Donald kept a boat at their riverside Eltham home to access his farm property south of the river. In the 1950s the Blessed Sacrament Fathers had a footbridge constructed across the river from their seminary at Lower Plenty.

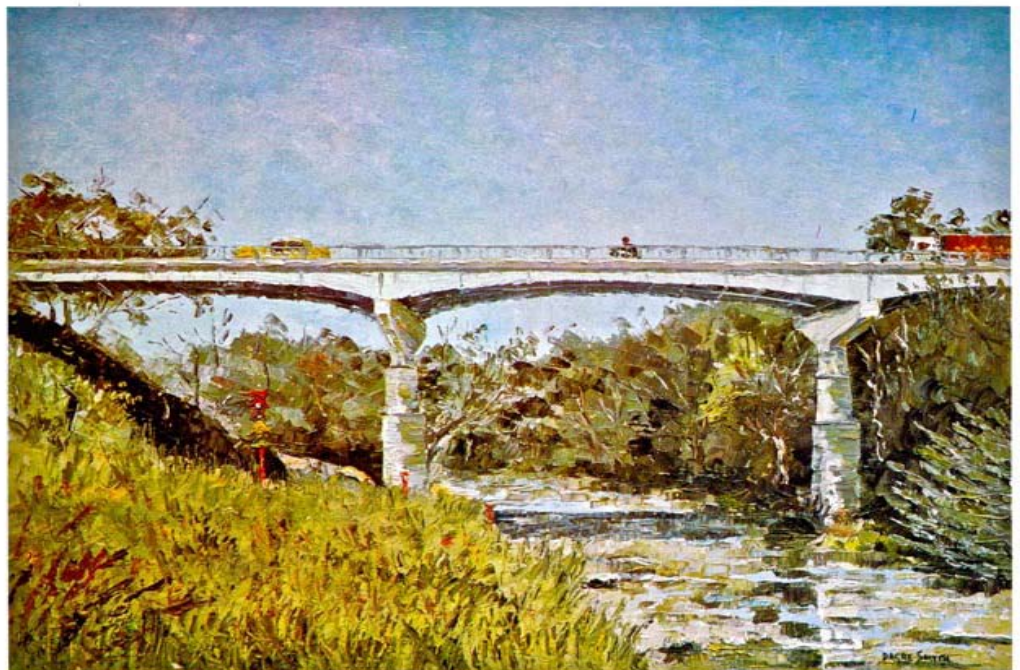
Fitzsimons Lane seems an odd name for a main road carrying large volumes of traffic. Prior to the opening of the bridge it was a farm access road extending northerly from Porter Street Templestowe to the Yarra River. In his book "Melbourne Miles" Max Lay describes the origins of the lane and the reason for its selection for the route across the river.

He Says:

"Fitzsimons Lane is shown as a road reservation in Foot's map of 1854. John Fitzsimon was a settler who bought the property on the north-eastern corner of Porter Street and the future Fitzsimons Lane in the 1860s."

In 1955 the Country Roads Board (CRB) produced survey plans that showed proposed land acquisition for the future bridge and road approaches. The plans showed the land on the eastern side of Fitzsimons Lane was owned by W Fitzsimons and R Fitzsimons.

The 1955 plan shows that it was proposed to connect Fitzsimons Lane with Bolton Street in Eltham by a diagonal road across the river. The road connection would then continue along Bolton Street to Main Road. Prior to construction of the bridge the CRB modified the proposal significantly so that there was a new road parallel with Bolton Street and then curving to join Main Road at what was then its intersection with Old Eltham Road. This involved significantly more land acquisition and altered the pattern of land subdivision through this corridor.



Fitzsimons Lane Bridge from the book 'The Bridges of the Yarra' by Dacre Smyth
Painting and poem printed with kind permission of the Smyth family

Poem by Dacre Smyth

*There's a bridge on an lane called Fitzsimon
In a place that's renowned for its women
Whose sons and daughters
Canoe in white waters
Which sometimes results in their swimmin'!*

(continued on page 4)

On the north side of the river the CRB plan shows that the affected land was owned by M E Robinson Wood. This was Crown Allotment 1A (CA 1A) of the Town of Eltham, purchased from the Crown by W Long in 1902 and containing about 15 acres (6ha). It was situated at the south – western corner of the Government town of Eltham and was bounded by the river on the south and Yarra Hill Close (formerly the southern part of Bolton Street) on the west. It extended northerly to the present day Homestead Road (formerly Banoon Road).

In the 1920s CA 1A had been subdivided into 29 residential lots based on a street Hawkswood Avenue that is shown on a Shire of Eltham Plan of Portion of the South Riding from that time (*map section at page 2*). It appears that the lots were never sold separately and the street was not constructed. Also in the 1920s a State Electricity Commission easement was created across the land for the purpose of major transmission lines that remain a dominant landscape feature today.

During the time of the CRB acquisition this 15 acre property was owned by Dr. Frank Robinson Wood (known as Robin) and his wife Margery. Robin was a Collins Street dentist. They had owned the land for some years but did not build a house on it until about 1955. They named the house “Robin Hill”. It remains today with the name “Robin Woods”. Margery died in 1971 and Robin died in 1976.

The acquisition for the new road cut the land into two parts with the house on the larger southern part. The Woods’ daughter-in-law, also Robin, is a member of our Society.

She recalls that when she married their son Christopher in 1960 they were offered the northern part of the land to build their house. They declined the offer and built elsewhere in Eltham. They did not want to live adjacent to a main road. This land is now a bushland reserve.

In 1991 a new bridge was built to the west of the original bridge. Fitzsimons Lane was widened to four traffic lanes although on the Eltham side this was done within the limits of the existing cutting.



‘Robin Woods’ - the house formerly known as ‘Robin Hill’
photograph: Russell Yeoman

New bridges over the Yarra for pedestrian and bicycle traffic have been provided at Westerfolds Park and at Eltham Lower Park.

Today there are three additional houses built on multiple lots of the 1920s subdivision of CA 1A. Although this land is within the Government Town of Eltham it is now within the City of Banyule and the postal address is Lower Plenty.

This article follows on from a recent enquiry to the Society in relation to a school assignment.

Thanks to the Webster Survey Group, Eltham for providing CRB survey plans

The following comments obtained from Trove were in local papers during the period January to June 1916

Jan 14 Quite a number of members of the Hurstbridge Cricket Club have enlisted and gone to the front, amongst them being Driver H. Davies of the 10th Battalion, 4th Brigade. On the eve of his departure Bert was presented by his Hurstbridge friends with a periscope, a fountain pen, and a money belt. - EOBER

Jan 28 A well-known and respected resident, in the person of the late Mr William Walsh, of the Pound, Eltham, joined the majority on Thursday, 20th. The deceased was a native of Galway, Ireland, and also a colonist of 57 years, 47 of which had been spent in Eltham. He passed away at the ripe old age of 84. He was of the fine genial type of Irishman, and was well known on the Heidelberg-Eltham road. He was in charge of the pound the whole of his life in Eltham. The remains were interred in the Eltham cemetery on Saturday last, a great following testifying to the respect felt for the deceased and his family. - EOBER

Jan 28 On Tuesday evening, 25th January, a well-attended meeting, convened by several of the residents of Queenstown, was held in the Mechanics' Institute, Queenstown. It was moved by Mr. D. Walker, seconded by Mr. C. Blair, that a bush fire brigade be formed. - EOBER

Feb 11 The Eltham Council is undoubtedly patriotic. It will be remembered that ex-Cr. Downer resigned his seat some 12 months' ago and went to the front, and now Cr. Smedley has enlisted. Cr. Hubbard has three sons who have enlisted, Cr. Morris two, and Cr. Mealy one. Not a bad record! - EOBER

Feb 25 The Recruiting Officer, Sergeant ?owner, has paid one or two visits to the [Eltham] township and neighbourhood in search of recruits for the new army. He has in all cases been received with courtesy, but his persuasive eloquence has not availed to shift many of those who answered "No" on the cards. Most of our available young men have already enlisted, though there are some left yet who do not seem to realise their responsibility, and their excuses are varied and in some cases very "thin." Some, in fact, do not appear to have sent in their papers at all, hoping thereby to escape notice. This hope is vain, and a friendly warning may save such from penalty. All are free to say "Yes" or "No", but not to refuse to say either. Cards must be filled in before the 1st of March. - EOBER

Mar 10 Among local young men who have enlisted and are now in camp, besides those we have before mentioned, are Ivan McLachlan, of Research, and Reg Swift formerly of Kangaroo Ground. Both these young men are well and favourably known locally, and in the past have always willingly assisted in local social functions. - EOBER

Mar 14 The Eltham shire secretary, Mr. Wilson Thomas, has enlisted. He has been granted leave of absence, and his position in to he kept open for him on his return. Applications are to be invited for an acting secretary, preference to be given to a returned soldier. - Age

(continued on page 6)

One Hundred Years Ago – Eltham and District – January – June 1916

(continued from page 5)

Mar 24 Christmas Hills and district has suffered a severe loss through the death of Mrs Maude Martin, wife of Mr Andrew Martin, of “Chiselhurst.” - EOBER

Apr 7 An enthusiastic “send-off” to eleven local recruits was carried out on Saturday last, 1st inst., in the local Eltham I.O.R. Hall, Cr. G. W. McCracken presiding. It was unfortunate that several of those to be honored could not get from camp and one had sailed for the front. Those present were:- Percy Thomas, W. Orford, R. Morris, G. Moore, - Miller, - Sharpe, and - Sims, the last three from the Montmorency Estate.

The absentees were: Len Gollings, Ern Shillinglaw, and Jack Allan in camp, and W. Moseley at sea. During the entertainment opportunity was taken to present Mr. W. Dunstan, the H.T. of the local State school, with a large-framed photograph of the school children, teachers, and School Committee as a memento of his term of service here. - EOBER

Apr 29 The anniversary of the Methodist Church at Eltham was celebrated on Monday evening by a coffee supper.- HNGDCC

May 19 Some 70 or 80 wounded convalescent soldiers visited Eltham Saturday afternoon last in ... a charabanc, and were [entertained] on the “Bend” with afternoon tea by the Red Cross Branch, assisted by friends of both sexes. - EOBER

May 26 In order to make the Eltham Shire Roll of Honor as complete as possible, parents, relatives and friends’ of soldiers who have enlisted from the Shire since the beginning of the war are requested to forward names, date of enlistment, and to which unit attached, to Mr P. J. McMahon, Acting Shire Secretary, Shire Office, Kangaroo Ground, as soon as possible. - EOBER

June 9 Eltham Shire Council – Correspondence from Secretary for Railways, replying that the [extra] daily running of the train asked for on the Eltham line would necessitate the employment of additional staff at some of the stations thereby involving heavy expenditure which it is considered would not be justified by the prospective traffic, and therefore the request could not be acceded to. - EOBER

June 9 We commend to our readers the appeal for funds on behalf of the Overseas Club Southern Cross Tobacco Fund. The men on active service have to content themselves with the bare necessities of life, but as long as they have cigarettes and tobacco, they are in good spirits. - EOBER

Jun 10 The Scoutmasters’ Association’s conference camp held was held at Eltham from June 3 to June 5 inclusive. - WT

Newspaper references

AGE – The Age, **EOBER** – Evelyn Observer and Bourke East Record, **WT** – Weekly Times

HNGDCC – Heidelberg News and Greensborough and Diamond Creek Chronicle

To access these articles and to read more visit <http://trove.nla.gov.au/list?id=89036>

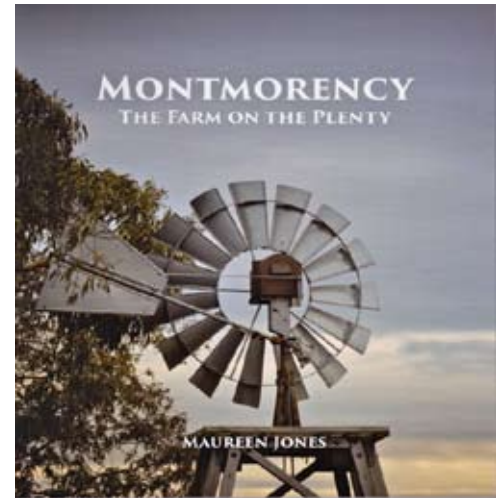
Recent Book Releases

We are fortunate to have in our Society a number of members who are active authors skilled in researching and writing about our local history. Recently three books of interest from members have become available.

'Montmorency – The Farm on the Plenty', was published by Maureen Jones in October 2015 after extensive research about Montmorency, as well as its' people, past and present.

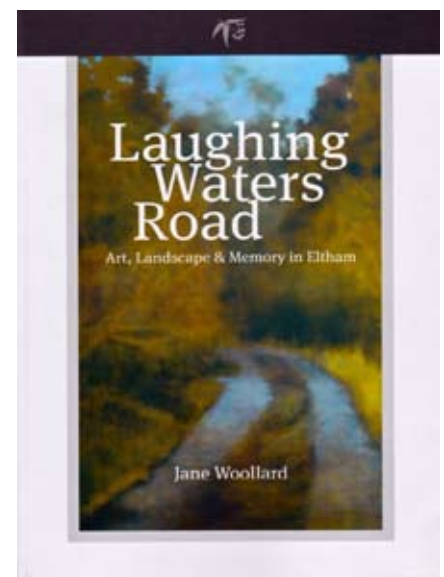
This book contains many little known details about the history of Montmorency, which Maureen considers for many is still a hidden part of Melbourne. Her detailed writings allow us insights into the individuals and actions involved in creating the suburb we know today.

Maureen's contributions and her publication were recently acknowledged when she was a finalist in the 2016 Citizen of the Year Award, presented by the Banyule City Council. Copies of her book are still available - contact Maureen at: amjones7@bigpond.com



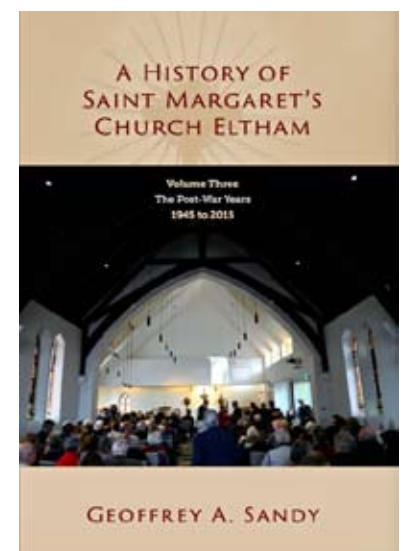
Jane Woollard spoke at our recent Annual General Meeting about the recently released book **'Laughing Waters Road – Art, Landscape and Memory in Eltham'**, written by Jane and published by Nillumbik Shire Council. This covers the Wurundjeri history and the later European occupation of this area of Eltham South, while highlighting Council's Artists in Residence program at Laughing Waters, in the Birrarung House and at Riverbend.

Jane's writings paint a meandering journey of intrigue and connections through the scattered history of Eltham and inhabitants. In doing so Jane has created an important record combining diverse facts into a resource that will become an established historical reference. This book can be obtained from Nillumbik Shire Council - contact 9433 3359 or artsinfo@nillumbik.vic.gov.au



On Sunday 22nd May 2016 Volume 3 of **'A History of Saint Margaret's Church Eltham'** was launched, appropriately at Saint Margaret's Church in Pitt Street, Eltham. The author, Dr. Geoffrey Sandy has released this companion edition to his Volume 1 published in February 2014. He will later complete the remaining Volume 2. While Volume 1 covered the Foundation Years from 1888, Volume 3 details the Post War Years from 1945 to 2015.

Both books historically record the development of the faith community based at this church and the significant contributions members of the congregation have made over the years to the local history and community of Eltham. This edition can be obtained from the author - contact: geoff@sandy.com.au.



Subscriptions

At the recent Annual General Meeting subscriptions for 2016-2017 were fixed at the same levels as last year and are as follows:

Single member	\$25.00	Newsletter subscription	\$15.00
Family	\$30.00	Business organisation	\$30.00

We encourage members to take the popular three year subscription option that is three times the annual fee. **Subscriptions are due on 1 July but earlier payment is welcomed.**

David Johns can receive your money either at the June meeting, by direct debit or through the mail.

Office Bearers 2016 - 2017

At the Annual General Meeting in April office bearers and committee members were elected for the coming year. Some changes have occurred and the full list of office bearers and committee members is as follows:

President	Jim Connor
Senior Vice-President	Maureen Jones
Junior Vice-President	Vacant
Treasurer / Membership Secretary	David Johns
Society Secretary	Russell Yeoman
Committee Members	- Alan Butler (Assistant Secretary), Diana Bassett-Smith Alison Delaney, Doug Orford, Jim Allen, Tony Brocksopp, Peter Pidgeon, Joan Castledine

Sue Law and Doug Orford have retired as Vice-Presidents after long and valuable service for which we extend our warm thanks. Doug remains as a committee member. We welcome new committee members Peter Pidgeon and Joan Castledine. We also welcome Maureen Jones in her new role as Senior Vice-President. The position of Junior Vice-President remains vacant. Any member who is interested to take on this position is asked to contact Jim Connor or Russell Yeoman.

...and also

Some newer members have been assisting at recent records workshops. We try to tailor tasks to members' individual interests as much as possible. All help at these workshops is appreciated. Coming dates for records workshops at the Local History Centre are:

Tuesdays 7.30pm - 7th June, 5th July
Mondays 9:30am - 20th June, 18th July

Contacts for the Eltham District Historical Society

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

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Committee of Management

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