

# Newsletter

No. 233 April 2017



## With a little help from our friends

Jim Connor

On the warm, sunny afternoon of the 4th March 2017 an Open Day was held at the refurbished Local History Centre of the Eltham District Historical Society, at 728 Main Road, Eltham.

During this afternoon there was an informal, symbolic 'reopening' of our Centre, with a cutting of a ribbon by Diana Bassett-Smith and Russell Yeoman, who have been members of our Society since it was established in 1967, 50 years ago.

In doing so we also acknowledged the many present and past members who have contributed to the development of our Society. Without their efforts during the last 50 years we would not be where we are today and would not hold, on behalf of our community, an extensive collection of 'saved' resources, including many photographs, books, documents and plans.

A significant achievement during this journey occurred in July 1998, when through the sustained actions of members our Local History Centre, in the former Eltham Police Residence, was opened as the valued and permanent home for EDHS.

Over the last few months, as we moved into our 50th Anniversary year, another major advance has been achieved as we have substantially refurbished and reorganised this building, affectionately known as '728'. Due to the work and generous financial support by a number of our members we now have the layout, technology and resources to assist our historical future.

Since the establishment in 1967 of the Shire of Eltham Historical Society, now the Eltham District Historical Society, many members have been formally and informally involved in creating our own 'history'. Our recent improvements have really just built another layer on the solid foundations they developed over these years.

We acknowledge and thank each and every one of our member 'friends' who have invested their energy, passion and skills in the continuing story of our Society, as we look forward to continuing to recognise, record and celebrate our valuable local history.



Diana Bassett-Smith and Russell Yeoman having cut the ribbon



Life members  
Mary Regan and Sue Law



Life members  
Doug Orford, Sue Law and Harry Gilham

## Annual General Meeting

8.00pm Wednesday 12th April 2017

Eltham Senior Citizens' Centre

Library Place, Eltham (Melway Map 21 ref J5)

## Heritage Excursion

Eltham South Ramble

2.00pm Saturday 6th May 2017

See further details on page 2

## Annual General Meeting - Wednesday 12th April 2017

Our meeting at 8.00pm on Wednesday 12th April 2017 is our Annual General Meeting, which includes the presentation of annual reports and the election of office bearers for the coming year. The official notification of the Annual General Meeting and Agenda are on page 8 in this Newsletter.

At this meeting we are pleased to have as our guest speaker Dr. Andrew Lemon, a great friend of EDHS and a Fellow and the immediate Past President of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria.

Andrew is an independent Melbourne historian, author of numerous books on local history, shipwrecks, biography, schools and sport and winner of national literary awards. He has been awarded the degree of Doctor of Letters by the University of Melbourne for his published works. Andrew edited the Victorian Historical Journal throughout the 1990s and served on the Library Board of Victoria and the Heritage Council.



Dr. Andrew Lemon

Andrew is a very entertaining presenter and in our 50th Anniversary year he has chosen to speak about 'Fifty years of the EDHS - *and why it matters.*' We look forward to again welcoming Andrew to share time with us.

## May Excursion – Eltham South Ramble

In the early days of our Society our excursions were usually bus trips to places of historic interest away from Eltham. For nearly 20 years our excursions have been far more local, mainly comprising walks around many parts of the Eltham district. The first such walk was a leisurely stroll through the Eltham South area.

Although that walk has been repeated several times with some variations it is considered appropriate in this our 50th year to again take a ramble visiting historic sites in Eltham South. On the way we will pass such places as White Cloud Cottage, the old buildings of Eltham Primary School, teacher David Clark's cottage "Shoestring" and artist Percy Leason's house "Landscape". We will walk through the historic Eltham Cemetery and Wingrove Park, a site of Aboriginal significance.



The Road to Eltham South c Early 1900s

This walk on Saturday 6th May 2017 is about 3.5 km in length and will take 2 to 2.5 hours. It will start at 2pm at the Eltham Local History Centre 728 Main Road (Melway ref 21J7). Our early walks finished with a cuppa and biscuit and we will reinstate that feature for this walk.

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.

## Don't Forget

Our coming Records Workshops at our Local History Centre are on Tuesday 4th April at 7.30pm, Monday 17th April at 9.30am, Tuesday 2nd May at 7.30pm and Monday 15th May at 9.30am. Everyone is welcome to assist at these workshops.





It's 1911. I like Audrey. She often comes to visit me here at Lowestoft in North Warrandyte, where she likes to roam wild in the bush beside the river. She lives at Melbourne University with her parents, William and Ethel Osborne, who bought this place last year as a holiday home. To get here, they have to take a train to Ringwood and then a horse-drawn coach to the Warrandyte Bridge, before walking up a long steep track to the house. William and Ethel will both turn out to be influential scientists. But I want to tell you what will become of Audrey.

Throughout her life, Audrey will have an interest in the field of nutritional science and will become a pioneer in the academic field of dietetics. She will complete a degree in Agricultural Science (majoring in botany and zoology) in 1928 and her first job will be as a microbiologist and food analyst with Kraft in 1929. Later she will be employed as chief dietitian at St Vincent's Hospital, at the Victorian Mental Hygiene Department, at the Royal Perth Hospital, and during the war at the Heidelberg Military Hospital. In 1936 Audrey will be a founding member of the Dietetics Association, which will lobby the Victorian Government to adopt a registration procedure in order to keep 'quacks' out of the profession.

From 1947 until her retirement in 1968, Audrey will be a lecturer (chief lecturer from 1959) in nutrition and dietetics at Melbourne University. Her principal research work during this time will include examining the physical properties and energy value of common dietary foods, in order to compile calorie tables. She will be among the first experts to recommend reducing fat intake and substituting polyunsaturated fatty acids for saturated fats. She will promote a well-balanced diet, shunning high-dose vitamin supplements and other pill-based nutritional approaches (despite Melbourne University receiving substantial funding from Nicholas Pty. Ltd. (Aspro) to set up a nutrition department!). Between 1954 and 1971, she will help to conduct a study of child growth in Melbourne, allowing the growth patterns of Australian children to be compared with those in Britain and the United States.

Audrey will have a younger sister called Charis, who will also come to Lowestoft. Charis will be the inaugural president of the Shire of Eltham Historical Society between 1967 and 1976. Sadly, the house and garden at Lowestoft will be destroyed in a bushfire in 1939. Fortunately, though, the gatekeeper's residence, dating in part from the 1860s and known as White Cottage, will survive.

Audrey will live at White Cottage from 1947 until moving to Murrumbateman (near Yass) in 1992. She will also become a member of the Eltham District Historical Society and remain so until her death in 2008, aged 102.

But that's all in the future. I'm more excited about today. Clara Southern is coming here to paint a picture of Audrey and me. *My name is Chickapick.*

(Sources: Wikipedia; Australian Women's Register (via Trove); obituary in The Age (12/5/2008); Osborne Landcare Group website)



Audrey Josephine Cahn  
Photograph date/source unknown



'Audrey and Chickapick' by Clara Southern, 1911

## Eltham District Historical Society

During this 50th Anniversary year we are revisiting aspects of the history of our Society, including those individuals who contributed to the establishment of the Shire of Eltham Historical Society in 1967, known since the local government restructure process in 1993/94 as the Eltham District Historical Society. In our last newsletter we discussed Charis Pelling, our first President. This time we consider a member of the interim committee, who was then elected to the inaugural committee:

### Stanley Simpson Addison

Stanley Simpson Addison was born in South Australia in 1880, had an interesting and varied life, including experiences as an apprentice blacksmith, coachman, a laboratory assistant and a searcher for the Red Cross visiting field hospitals on the battlefields in Gallipoli and France during World War One. He then joined the Royal Navy with the rank of Sub-Lieutenant where he was involved in secret research into 'sound ranging'. Stanley achieved science and arts degrees, had a strong interest in economics and was awarded an MBE in 1920 for his services to the British Red Cross Society.

Yet, with this background how was he involved in the establishment of the Eltham District Historical Society?

After this war he returned from England with his wife Vera and became assistant registrar at the Melbourne University, where he played a substantial role in establishing Melbourne University Press. In 1938 at age 58 he joined the Victorian Branch of the Australian Red Cross Society in the senior role of General Secretary. During the Second World War Stanley used his earlier war experiences to benefit the activities of Red Cross personnel supporting the war efforts. He was 67 years old when he retired from the Red Cross Society in 1947.

Stanley and Vera then moved to 'High Acre', a 20-acre property in Kangaroo Ground on the western side of the main road just north of the General Store, which he owned at one time. Not being a man to retire gracefully he soon became actively involved in local community matters, was elected an Eltham Shire Councillor (1949-56) and was Shire President.



Stanley Simpson Addison  
Photograph supplied by a family member

During his seven years as a councillor he contributed to many community based initiatives including negotiating the connection of electricity services to Kangaroo Ground, Smiths Gully and Panton Hill areas, development of the Eltham War Memorial Trust complex and establishment of various community and business related groups.

His significance to our Society is that he was a member of the original interim committee set up in June 1967 to consider establishment of an historical society for the then Shire of Eltham. He actually seconded the motion, moved by Alistair Knox in October 1967, at the first formal meeting to establish this organisation and was then elected to the inaugural committee, when Charis Pelling became the first President.

So for a man who started life on a farm in South Australia, studied at university and travelled extensively during times of significant worldwide turmoil he went on in later life to continue contributing to support and develop local infrastructure and community activities, including investing his energies and skills in helping establish our Historical Society.



Tales about the famous Eltham Barrel continue to be told.

It seems many people have memories of attending significant celebrations, 21st birthdays, fund raising activities, Christmas functions, catching up with friends there or just enjoying the Swiss/Bavarian style entertainment on offer.

Since the article by Jim Allen in our newsletter number 229 in August 2016 and our special Eltham Barrel display at the Rotary Eltham Festival in November 2016, a number of people have told of their experiences and reminiscences when this restaurant was operating as one of the most popular entertainment venues in suburban Melbourne. Others still own related souvenirs, such as glass vases, menus, photographs, beer steins, etc. There have also been some suggestions as to how the fateful fire started that destroyed this landmark restaurant in Main Road Eltham on 4th June 1989.

Another interesting aspect to this ongoing story is the contact our Society recently received from a family whose Eltham home incorporates some substantial structural elements purchased when the burnt out building was demolished. Within their house are two massive timber beams previously used at the restaurant, including the one that spanned the entry portico and is carved with the Eltham Barrel name.

A crane truck was required to remove and transport these large timbers to their site. They also used about 15,000 old hand made bricks from the building in the construction of their house.

The Eltham Barrel name on the beam across the entry can be seen in many photos of this restaurant, including on rare small souvenir coin trays, some of which our Society still has for sale.

So while this well known iconic restaurant has gone, never to return, the memories and stories live on, while some remnants of the building continue to bring joy to others.

Newsletter number 229 containing the earlier story can be downloaded from the EDHS website at: [www.elthamhistory.org.au](http://www.elthamhistory.org.au)

Souvenir coin trays are available for \$15 each (plus postage and packaging, if required). Contact [edhsoffice@gmail.com](mailto:edhsoffice@gmail.com)



The Eltham Barrel carved beam and bricks used inside the Eltham house



Small souvenir coin tray available from the Eltham District Historical Society



There are many different aspects to our local history with various twists, turns and changes of direction since our early pioneers moved beyond the growing towns into rural areas. The extended Eltham district was no exception, with individuals seeking to utilise broad acres for housing, farming purposes and various other activities.

So how does motorcycle scrambling fit in with our local history?.....*and well you may ask.*

By definition, a motorcycle scramble involves a cross-country race over a closed course of rough terrain with steep hills and sharp curves. We know there is no shortage of 'rough terrain with steep hills' in parts of the broader Eltham district.

Whilst we are aware of the Rob Roy Hill Climb located in Christmas Hills, how many people know there was a motorcycle scramble track, in the area that is now the Sugarloaf Reservoir?

This activity was established in the early 1960s on farmland owned by the Ashmore family in Ashmore Road at Christmas Hills, after Stan Ashmore had discussed his ideas with John Burrows and Keith Stacker, who were well known by the motorcycle fraternity as they operated a popular motorcycle repair business in the Melbourne suburb of Malvern. Stan had an interest in go carts and motorcycles and was a regular customer of this business.

As a result of these discussions, some members of the Hartwell Motorcycle Club, including John Burrows and Wes Brown, visited the Ashmore family farm at Christmas Hills. Here they discovered a section of the property did indeed have some potential for a track, with rough terrain and steep hills separated by a gully. They felt this area could be developed to provide the challenges with the twists and turns favoured by motorcycling scrambling enthusiasts. Fortunately for them the Ashmore family was supportive.



John Burrows completing on his Triumph Metisse showing the downhill and uphill sections of the track at Christmas Hills

Members of the Hartwell Motorcycle Club, established in 1931, then set about the mammoth task of transforming the hills and gully into what became a well regarded scrambling circuit, which went on to regularly host many race days with local, national and even international riders competing. These events at times attracted thousands of spectators. On the 4th August 1963 the first competitive event was staged, it was a combined club day between Hartwell, Preston, Dandenong, Newport, Nunawading and Gippsland Central motorcycle clubs.

At the time motorcycle scrambling was a popular sport with various clubs actively promoting graded competition within their groups or with other clubs. There were a number of tracks close to Melbourne, including one at Fishermans Bend, with other circuits located in rural parts of Victoria, as well as elsewhere around Australia.



*(continued on page 7)*



## The Christmas Hills Motorcycle Scramble Track

(continued from page 6)

Over the years between the start in 1963 until the circuit closed in 1977 spectators crammed onto the site to watch many competitors take on the challenging circuit, made even more difficult after heavy rain when it could become a mud bath. Motorcycles being raced changed from heavy old post war, mainly British bikes to more competitive purpose built models, including the introduction of lighter Japanese designed bikes.

In May 1977 the last race was held there as the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works was acquiring many properties in the Christmas Hills area, including the one owned by the Ashmore family. As always, history moves on and the site of the circuit eventually became part of the extensive Sugarloaf Reservoir, so is now under many metres of water. Stan Ashmore stayed in the area and was Superintendent of the Eltham Shire Council mechanical workshop during the 1980s.

*Permission received to use the photograph and diagram from the Old Bike Australasia magazine (Issue 29 January/February 2012)*

## What Were They Like?

Joan Castledine

Many of our readers are familiar with the story of Eltham's first Policeman, Peter Lawlor, BUT; did Peter Lawlor and Evan Evans leisurely wander the deck of the Barque 'Salem', sailing from Liverpool to Melbourne in 1855, wistfully espousing their prospects in a new country?

Did Peter's new bride Kate Lawlor, help Jane Evans, with her 7 children during the hazardous journey?

Peter Lawlor was Irish and Evan Evans was Welsh and they spent their early working lives in Ireland. Peter as a Policeman and Evan as a Master Mariner, though both listed their occupations as 'Farmers' on the 'Salem's' Passenger List. Evan was born in Aberdovey, Wales in 1802 and at age 11 was an Apprentice on the 'Aberdovey' from 1813 -1819, by the age of 17 he was a Mate on the 'Margaret' and at 25 years old a Master Mariner.



Sailing ship 'Salem' built c1850  
Location of painting unknown

On the 16 October 1854 as Master of the Barque 'Tottenham', sailing from Cork to North America with 110 passengers, his ship floundered near Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. Thankfully, all passengers and luggage were saved by being transferred to a nearby vessel.

Evan applied for Renewal of his Master's Certificate on the 27 December, 1854 stating his ...was lost on the wreck of the 'Tottenham'. His Master's Certificate was renewed on the 6 January, 1855, though he did not captain another vessel, instead leaving Liverpool on the 20 February 1855 with his family for Melbourne. He purchased property in North Melbourne and in 1867 his occupation was described as Halter Maker.

Evan and Jane are my Great Great Great Grandparents. Who would have envisaged that Evan and Jane's Great Great Granddaughter would attend the same Eltham Primary School as the Lawlor children, albeit some 56 years later and that Evan's Great Great Granddaughter Mercia (Polly) Castledine is now resting 50 metres from the Lawlor family grave in the Eltham Cemetery.

As I amble through the Cemetery, I pause at the Lawlor grave. If only I could ask Peter. Did he know my Great Great Great Grandparents?..and if so, what were they like? What did they look like?..and please tell me about 5 year old Sarah Evans, who became my Great Great Grandmother.

## 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 8.00pm on Wednesday 12th April 2017, at the Eltham Senior Citizens' Centre.

The agenda of the Annual General Meeting is set out below in accordance with the rules:

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of 2016 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
  - Society Secretary
  - Treasurer/Membership Secretary
  - Ordinary Committee Members (minimum of three members)
5. Election of Membership Sub-Committee (three members)
6. Fixing of entrance fee (if any) and annual subscription
7. Any other business of which at least two weeks notice has been given to members

It should be noted that under the Society's rules nominations for all positions are to be made at the meeting.

Over the last year our committee and other members have been very active and generous, especially in regard to supporting the refurbishment and reorganisation of our Local History Centre. While much work has been completed there is still more to be done and you can assist.

We therefore urge members to contribute to the operation of our Society by becoming an office bearer or committee member. Please give the matter some consideration and, if in doubt, discuss it with one of our office bearers. The workload is not great. There are usually just five daytime committee meetings each year, alternating with our society meetings. We warmly welcome fresh ideas to help us to continue to run a vibrant organisation.

## Contacts for the Eltham District Historical Society

- Jim Connor, President – Telephone 0418 379 497 – [edhshistory@gmail.com](mailto:edhshistory@gmail.com)
- Russell Yeoman, Society Secretary – Telephone 9439 9717 – [edhsoffice@gmail.com](mailto:edhsoffice@gmail.com)
- David Johns, Treasurer / Membership Secretary – Telephone 9434 3357

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