



History Matters

Jim Connor

We are not makers of history. We are made by history Martin Luther King Jnr.

History matters... to our sense of place, where we are both physically and mentally, where we fit into the place where we are and how we relate to our surroundings.

History matters... when locating yourself in time, in your part of your own history, whether it is your family, your community, your culture, your lived life experiences. These all form part of our own history we carry with us and build on as we proceed on our life journey.

History matters... to the political climate of the time, what has or has not occurred and how those decisions impact on our past, current and future history.

History matters... to how we honour our own history and of those we relate to.

History matters... to how our built and natural environment evolves, how it reflects and respects the past and how it is developed or changed around us and by us.

History matters... if we think it does, if we believe it does, if we encourage others to understand it does.

History matters... to our memories that retain our history and to the memories of those around us.

History matters... to the stories we know and tell and the stories of other people.

History matters... to how we see ourself in the world.

History just matters!

Stories of history we tell not only shape our past, they shape our future as well

Next Meeting

8.00pm Wednesday 9th August 2017

Eltham Senior Citizens' Centre

Library Place, Eltham (Melway Map 21 ref J5)

Heritage Excursion

An Eltham South Ramble

2.00pm Saturday 2nd September 2017

See further details on page 2

9th August Meeting - The Shallards of Montmorency

Our meeting at 8.00pm on Wednesday 9th August 2017 is at the Eltham Senior Citizens Centre in Library Place, Eltham (Melway Map 21 ref.J5)

Blanche and Jack Shallard were involved in many activities in the Montmorency community throughout their lives. They observed Were Street grow from a one shop street to a bustling shopping village. Jack was a local solicitor and on the Board of the Diamond Valley Community Hospital, while Blanche was a member of the Hospital Auxiliary and both were involved with our Society. They were also connected with Montmorency State School and St Faith's Church in Montmorency.

At this meeting we are pleased to have their daughter, Professor Margaret Deighton, speak about her family and her recollections of growing up in Montmorency.



'The Windmill' in Were Street, Montmorency
Photograph by Jim Connor

Heritage Excursion - Saturday 2nd September - An Eltham South Ramble

Now if this excursion sounds familiar.... *it is because it is!*

(This walk was scheduled for May but for several reasons including inclement weather it had to be postponed. We hope for better luck this time.)

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.



Main Road Bridge over the Diamond Creek in the early 1900s
Turnaround point for this heritage excursion

On the way we will pass artist Percy Leason's house "Landscape" where we will read from Margot Tasca's recent book on Leason's life about the construction of the house and studio. (See review of this book on page 4). Other places along the way include White Cloud Cottage, the old buildings of Eltham Primary School and teacher David Clark's cottage "Shoestring". We will walk through the historic Eltham Cemetery and Wingrove Park, a site of Aboriginal significance.

This walk on Saturday 2nd September 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.

In early 1941 the Baddeley family moved from Heidelberg to Montmorency with their teenage children, my brother Arthur an engineering student and myself, Jean, studying at RMIT to be an art teacher. I kept up my membership of 1st Heidelberg Girl Guide Company by train each Monday night; but was quite soon joined by girls from Montmorency, a few from Eltham, Briar Hill, Greensborough, Watsonia and Macleod.

We added to the numbers at Heidelberg until the obvious solution was to have Guides at Montmorency. So that's what we did; holding our first meeting on New Year's Day 1943. I was appointed Captain; a war time concession allowed for 18 yrs (not 21) for a captain.

Our numbers grew as much as was permitted but after one year I was appointed to teach at Wodonga, where the secondary students wanted to join Guides (and had an actual captain teaching them at school). So I started 1st Wodonga Guides on July 4th 1944. With co-operation from Guides' mothers, including my own, 1st Montmorency kept going, I sent them a weekly letter, came home on long weekends and school holidays. So I happened to be simultaneously captain of two Guide companies, 200 miles apart.

1st Montmorency was glad to have me home again after one year's absence but Wodonga didn't forget me. I have attended by invitation Wodonga District's many birthday parties – the most recently on 2nd August 2014, celebrating 70 years of guiding there. The photograph of the Guard of Honour at my wedding to Rev. Jock Ryan of Diamond Creek shows Monty Guides wishing us well on September 22, 1951.

Later as the vicar's wife at Holy Trinity Doncaster I founded 2nd Doncaster Guides. Then eight years later in our parish in Glen Iris I became Akela for 15th Malvern Pack Club. This lasted for eleven years until I became involved teaching high levels. I taught Art at Templestowe High, Canterbury Girls High and the Junior School (then called Malvern House) and Senior Schools of Caulfield Grammar.

1st Montmorency Guides enjoyed hiking in the local hilly area and further afield. Wandering along the roadside verges was enjoyed, collecting wild briar rose hips because the Royal Melbourne Hospital staff could produce rose hip syrup to provide vitamin C for the patients. The quantities we gathered astonished the hospital staff. This was our war effort from 1943-1946.

One outstanding time was the visit of Lady Baden Powell to Victoria; there were three events, a get together at the Exhibition Buildings, a rally at the showgrounds and a Bush Field Day. The Field day was held at Montmorency with 1st Montmorency and Guiders as hostesses.



Monty Guides at Jean and Jock Ryan's Wedding - 1951
Photograph provided by Jean Ryan



Captain -1st Montmorency - off to camp
Photograph provided by Jean Ryan

(continued on page 4)

The area used for this was known as Mrs Nicholson's paddock on the side of the Glengarriff Estate, still bush yet, with no development of the few blocks sold facing Price Avenue. Headquarters for the days was on what is now 20-26 Price Avenue. Many hundreds of Guides came to Montmorency for the day and Greensborough Scouts came and helped in erecting canvas facilities.

There were scouts in Montmorency in 1943, but they had to be members of Greensborough or Eltham although the Scouters Doug Middleton and Robert Barling lived in Montmorency and Briar Hill.

In artistic and handicraft activities Monty Guides excelled. They made the Brownie's toadstool with three dimensional fairies, so the Brownie pack could begin. They became the Heidelberg district experts in mapping, model making etc.

What was our meeting place? Monty Hall on Rattray Rd. We used it for parties and combined events but otherwise at St. Faith's Anglican Church. When I left Montmorency (as Jock's wife) who became Captain of 1st Montmorency Company? Wendy Barling, sister of Robert Barling. In Wendy's time the Briar Hill Hall (an ex army hut) was used for meetings.

Percy Leason An Artist's Life by Margot Tasca

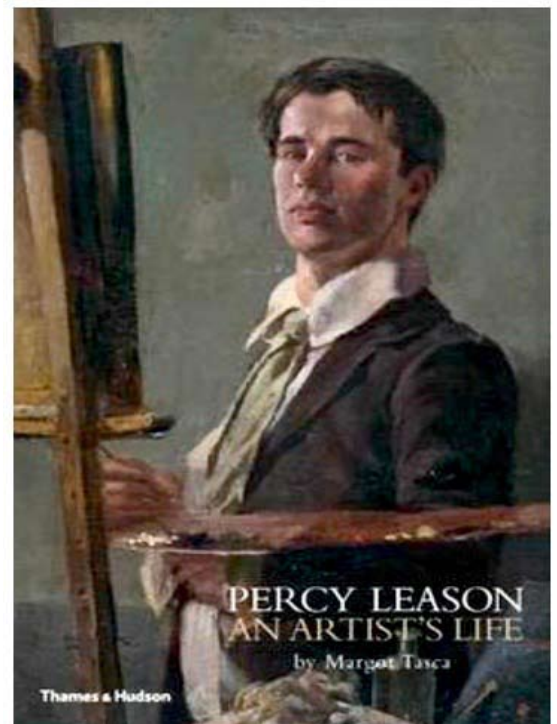
Russell Yeoman

Artist and cartoonist Percy Leason lived in Eltham during the 1920s and 30s. In recent times the former Leason house, "Landscape" in Lavender Park Road, was home to Margot Tasca who was proprietor of Eltham's Light Factory Gallery. Margot's book on Leason details the artist's life from his childhood in Kaniva in western Victoria through to his death in America in 1959. It is generously illustrated with Leason's paintings, cartoons and family photos.

Leason thought of himself as a serious artist but is best known for his cartoons including the Wiregrass series in the magazine Table Talk. Many people thought of Wiregrass as representing Kaniva but in fact it was a composite of many country towns. The book tells us that the cartoon "Electricity comes to Wiregrass" was produced soon after power came to Eltham.

The book provides a detailed account of Leason's time in Eltham including the building of "Landscape" and the large studio at the rear of the house. It deals at some length with Leason's interaction with the local artistic community including members of the Montsalvat artists' colony. It also deals extensively with Leason's position in the wider Victorian art scene.

This book, 'Percy Leason - An Artist's Life' by Margot Tasca, published by Thames and Hudson, is an important contribution to local Eltham history and to the history of art in Victoria.



Percy Leason - An Artist's Life
by Margot Tasca

Coincidentally the Society has been contacted in recent months by Percy's son Max and daughter Nancy. We were able to provide them with historical information about Eltham where they lived as children. Nancy describes herself as a 94 year old in pretty good health.

During this 50th Anniversary year we are revisiting the history of our Society, including those 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 edition we discussed Alistair Knox. This time we consider Russell Yeoman, who attended the initial community meeting convened to consider establishment of an historical society for the then Shire of Eltham.

Russell Yeoman

Russell is a founding member of our Society and in his role as our Secretary since 1969 has been a constant backbone of the Society consistently supporting the extensive range of activities that have occurred since then. He has contributed to numerous initiatives within our local area, particularly in respect of historical based matters through our Society, under both the former Shire of Eltham and the current Shire of Nillumbik.



Russell Yeoman
Photographs from the EDHS collection

It was through his forethought, prior to the establishment of our Society in 1967, that he had personally collected and saved many historically important records and documents. These were subsequently used as the basis of our significant collection of resources and many may have been lost, but for his actions.

No one person in our community has a more extensive knowledge of local history matters than Russell Yeoman. He is very well known and respected for his detailed historical knowledge and his ongoing commitment to local heritage matters.

Individuals involved in historical research often refer to him for advice. Quite clearly his contributions and service over so many years have made a significant difference to many people.



Eltham Festival Parade 1989

In addition to his active participation in protecting and preserving heritage sites in the district he has dedicated considerable time to a variety of Society related activities, including our newsletters, involvement with community groups, liason with Councils and collection and preservation of historical records. Russell has regularly arranged and led many heritage excursions, organised meeting minutes and records, as well as the presentation of heritage displays. In early days of the Society he was the secretary for the Shillinglaw Cottage Preservation Committee and worked with Alan Marshall on the development of the 'Pioneers and Painters' book, published by the Shire of Eltham to commemorate its centenary in 1971.

His detailed knowledge of the historical context of many properties in this area has been invaluable, as has been professional presentations to Nillumbik Shire Council and various Victorian planning tribunals. Our Society would not be the organisation it is today without his efforts.



Official Opening of our
Local History Centre 1998

Recently the Melbourne Age published an article entitled “Bend of Islands: the super-secret suburb you’ve never heard of...” However to the contrary, people have known of this natural bushland area adjoining the Yarra River in the far south-east corner of the Shire of Nillumbik for many years. As Melbourne grew as a city much of the more fertile surrounding areas were cleared for farming. The Bend of Islands bush remained and although it was used for timber harvesting mainly for fence posts, it was found by city dwellers and artists moving further out from the Heidelberg –Eltham areas as an ideal retreat from the hustle and bustle of city life. People established their “week-enders” along the river banks.

One of these artists, Neil Douglas found the area in the 1960’s and with a group of friends bought 120 acres along Henley Road. He recognised the value of preserving this special habitat and continued encouraging others of like-mind to purchase available land. Soon afterwards there was more interest in the area when it was mooted that the Board of Works were contemplating a dam on the Yarra River.



Neil Douglas

Neil had already been active in gathering the local community together to form the Bend of Islands Conservation Association to maintain the values of the area and deal with the issues of vegetation clearing and powerline proposals with the Shire of Healesville.

In 1972 the Yarra Brae Dam proposal became a reality and the community took action under the leadership of Mal McClure. Many submissions and much lobbying took place and an Environmental Impact Study got underway. With the threat of the dam, Neil Douglas and others set out to develop ideas regarding the best way to conserve the whole area.

In April 1974 the Yarra Brae - Sugarloaf Environmental Study was published by MMBW and revealed the values of the high quality remnant Box-Ironbark forest within such a close proximity to Melbourne.

In August 1974 Neil Douglas, Tim Ealey, Bob English, Gary Jungwirth, John Lawson and Mal McClure, presented a paper to the Australian Conservation Foundation Symposium on “Residential Conservation”. This paper outlined a proposal that the Bend of Islands environmental values be protected by allowing only indigenous planting, by prohibiting all domestic animals including cats and dogs along with a number of other strategies that would ensure minimum impact of residential uses in the area. The timing of this was optimal as the Board of Works were already drafting new planning proposals for the area.



The Yarra River

In September 1974 the Government decided not to proceed with the Yarra Brae Dam. In 1975 BICA requested the Government to institute a new zoning category for the area to be designated as “Residential Conservation”.

Then in March 1976 MMBW advised of the proposed Zone and changes to the Interim Development Order for the Bend of Islands, which was to cover not just reservoir site land but an extension into the adjoining area.

The Environmental Living Zone was now a Planning Category, combining environmental conservation with residential use, an unusual combination of land uses in an Australian context.

Finally in 1982 we celebrated the Gazettal of The Shire Of Healesville Interim Development Order thus creating a formal Environmental Living Zone.



BICA Celebration; Minister for Planning, Evan Walker cut a floral ribbon at Oxley Bridge and formally unveiled a road side sign indicating the Bend of Islands as an Environmental Living Zone.

In 1994 with the amalgamation of local government areas we became part of Nillumbik Shire and the area's specific zoning is now called Suz2- Environmental Living - Bend Of Islands.

In October 2016 BICA celebrated a milestone in the history of the Bend of Islands – 40 years since the introduction of the Shire of Healesville's Interim Development Order putting in place an Environmental Living Zone for the area. This has set the framework for us as residents to live in this special piece of bushland whilst at the same time conserving its biodiversity for the future.

All photographs provided by the Bend of Islands Conservation Association.



Membership Subscriptions

Subscriptions for 2017-18 were due on 1st July and we appreciate those members who have already renewed, or taken a 3 year membership.

Our small not-for-profit organisation relies on the support of our members and revenue from memberships and donations. In the past twelve months our Society has undergone noticeable changes with the refurbishment and reorganisation of our Local History Centre, upgrading of equipment and improved scanning and digitisation of our collection. Much of this has been possible through the generous financial donations of some members, but more funds are required to continue this process. This work helps us celebrate 2017 as our 50th anniversary year.

Current subscriptions are:

Single member	2017-18	\$25.00	3 year option	\$75.00
Newsletter only	2017-18	\$15.00	3 Year option	\$45.00
Family	2017-18	\$30.00	3 Year option	\$90.00
Business organisation	2017-18	\$30.00	3 Year option	\$90.00



An invoice will soon be sent to all listed members who have not renewed, but your payment would be welcome to David Johns at our August meeting, or sent to the Society's post office box - P.O. Box 137 Eltham, 3095.

In 1843 James Bruce Donaldson and his wife Isabella purchased 640 acres (1 square mile) from the Crown under Royal Orders in Council. This plot of land was known as Section 19 in the Parish of Nillumbik in the County of Evelyn. The site of Weller's hotel was at a later date to be built on in Section 19.

To those of us who do not understand details of early land grants and purchases from the Crown a simpler description would be that Wellers Pub was located at 150 Eltham – Yarra Glen Road or on Pitman's Corner half way between Research and Kangaroo Ground.

In 1853 Bruce and Isabella Donaldson were convinced by Thomas Armstrong to sell him the portion of land on which Wellers was to be later located. Now let us now return to the central character of our story.

Edward Weller the founder of Weller's Hotel at Kangaroo Ground was born in Buckinghamshire, England in 1836, the son of John Weller and Rebecca White. Edward's ancestors can be traced back to the historical Weller's Brewery in Amersham, which operated from 1762 to 1929. During the eighteenth and nineteenth century Wellers operated many hotels across England.

On 15th February 1849 at the age of 12 years Edward arrived in Port Phillip Bay on the ship Thetis with his father John 42, his stepmother Elizabeth 40 and siblings Rebecca 20, Mary Ann 17, Richard 14, Elizabeth 10, and John 8 years of age. Rebecca and Mary Ann did not disembark with the rest of the family at Melbourne as they both had employment elsewhere. The family remained in Melbourne for two years before they moved to the Caledonian gold fields where they stayed for a number of years.

Most of the information obtained for this article is taken from documents held by the Eltham District Historical Society, the Andrew Ross Museum in Kangaroo Ground, newspapers, and internet and referenced sources. Whilst every effort has been made to be as accurate as possible, as with most historical records as time passes mistakes and record keeping errors can occur.

By 1856 the Australian Electoral Roll indicates that Edward and his brother Richard were working as miners at Chinaman's Gully in the Borough of Sandhurst.

By 1862 Edward was a coachman working out of Sandhurst and somewhere during his travels he met Mary Band, a local girl who had migrated from Scotland with her family.

According to Victorian Birth, Death and Marriage Records they were married in Queenstown on the 27th March 1862. The ceremony occurred at the home of a Mr White, who is believed to have been the maternal grandfather of Edward.



Edward Weller 1837 - 1853

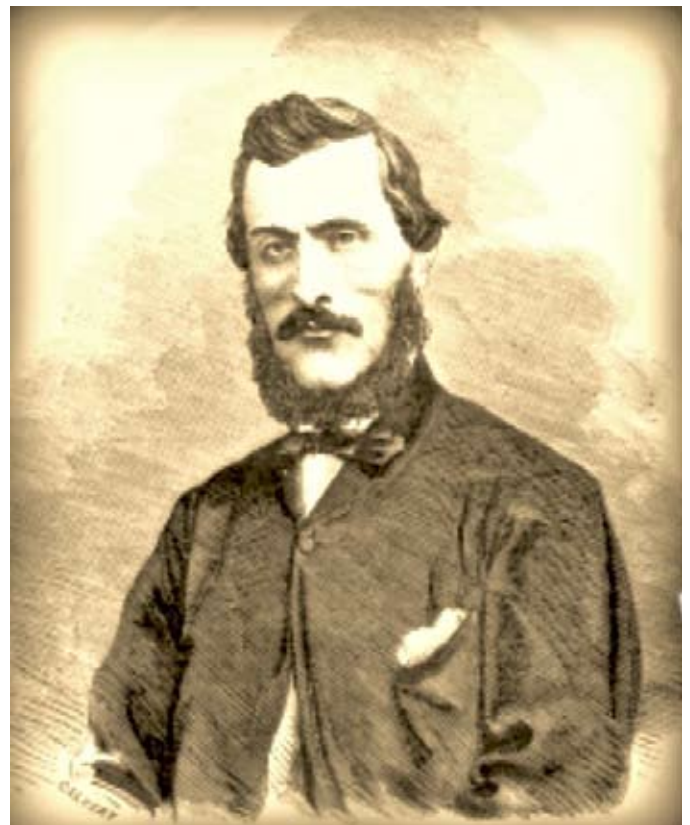
During their marriage Mary and Edward produced eleven children, Mary, Edward, John, Eliza, Isabella, Rhoda, James, Richard, Rebecca, Lily and David. Most married and settled in the district with the exception of Rhoda who died at the age of one year. The first two, Mary and Edward were born in 1862 and 1864 in Queenstown, those following were born in Kangaroo Ground.

Edward and Mary moved to Kangaroo Ground during the period 1865/66 and purchased nine acres of land. At the same time Edward rented a store located on the boundary of the land he had purchased.

On arrival in Kangaroo Ground Edward took over the position of Store Keeper. It would also appear that coaches using Weller's store as a staging post dropped off mail for delivery to the Kangaroo Ground Post Master. John Weller his brother purchased a portion of land diagonally opposite to where Wellers Pub would eventually be located, while John his son set up as a Kangaroo Ground Blacksmith.

In an article in the Argus newspaper (Melbourne Vic 1948 -1959) dated 9th October 1866 (amongst other newspapers) it was reported that the bushranger Robert Burke had shot Henry Hurst at Hurstbridge when he questioned him where he was going. As a secondary part of the article it mentioned that on the previous night the 3rd October, Wellers had an unexpected guest lodger to stay the night at their boarding house, next to their store. He ate the evening meal and after retiring to his room for the night rode off without paying his bill. It was lucky that Wellers did not know that he was Robert Burke the bushranger or he may have also challenged him and suffered the same fate as Hurst. Burke was later captured and hung at the Old Melbourne Gaol.

Whilst researching this article it was noted that Robert Burke's surname was often spelt in two different ways - for example: Mick Woiwod in his publication "Kangaroo Ground, The Highland Taken" on pages 180 and 181 spelt the bushranger's surname both as Burke and Bourke. It also mentions that Burke spent the night at a boarding house "kept by a person named Weller".



Henry Hurst shot by Robert Bourke in 1866

Prior to Edward purchasing the site for Wellers Pub the road ran to the rear of the property. Coinciding with that era a new road was proclaimed by the Eltham Districts Road Board.

This new road made the trip to the gold diggings a lot easier and resolved the problem of coaches becoming bogged on Damnation Hill, so named by bullockies who experienced difficulties in driving their teams with wagons loaded with logs up the steep slope. Once at the top of the hill they had to face a down-hill run called Ruination. The final section was called Salvation as the final hill on which the church was located could be sighted. So came to an end the problem of some of the steepest hills in the area.

(This story will be continued in our next newsletter)

Morrison Kleeman Real Estate

The Eltham District Historical Society appreciates the sponsorship support of **Morrison Kleeman Real Estate**. In 1991 Graham Morrison and Peter Kleeman commenced business together with the opening of Morrisons Estate Agents in Eltham. Their reputation for outright success has ensured the growth of the business and they now proudly boast the name Morrison Kleeman, with 3 successful offices covering the Diamond Valley area in Eltham, Greensborough and Doreen.



Their committed team is backed by the agency principals, who between them have more than 100 years of experience. They are active supporters of many community organisations within our local region.

A leading representative at Morrison Kleeman is Gayle Blackwood (contact 0408 776 070) who is a long term member of our Society.

Our Sponsors

We are delighted to welcome Montsalvat as a sponsor, for the next three years, of the Eltham District Historical Society. Montsalvat, fashioned out of the clay and stone of a beautiful Eltham hillside prides itself on being a place where art is made and taught, as well as exhibited. It is a significant part of our local history.

Please support our sponsors - they support our Society

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