

Newsletter

No. 243 December 2018



Historical Societies are Significant

Jim Connor

On the 13th November 2018 our society was honoured to receive a Certificate of Appreciation from the Royal Historical Society of Victoria (RHSV). This certificate was to commemorate the Eltham District Historical Society having been a member of the RHSV for over 50 years.

It was presented at a function attended by many historical societies and individual members, from various parts of Victoria; some had been associated with the RHSV for over 60 years.

Listening to the stories told by other recipients highlighted the significance of historical societies. These groups are the keepers of their community memories; they promote and encourage interest in their local history through collecting, researching and sharing an understanding of the value of what has occurred in the past. Volunteer members are the backbone of these organisations.



Don Garden, president - Royal Historical Society of Victoria with Jim Connor, president - EDHS

Many societies are located throughout Melbourne suburbs, as well as in most country towns. Local societies such as Heidelberg, Greensborough, Nillumbik, Box Hill, Camberwell, Ringwood and Lilydale, to name a few, have resources and facilities to view and explore. The Andrew Ross Museum at Kangaroo Ground has many displays reflecting life as it was in the region, as does the Yarrambat Heritage Museum, with a goldmine battery and other activities operating during their Open Day each October. We encourage you to visit, you never know what you might find out.

Going further afield you can visit societies throughout Gippsland, in the Western district or in northern Victoria. The Gold Museum in Ballarat has a diverse range of historical collections, the Castlemaine Historical Society is in a former Court House, the Wangaratta Historical Society in an old fire station, there is an extensive historic and cultural precinct at Beechworth and you can immerse yourself in heritage Yackandandah, but allow plenty of time to explore their museum in a former bank building, as well as their cottage displays, including a rare 'double dunny'!

So go on,..... make some time to get out and explore our local history. As a starting point you can visit www.elthamhistory.org.au and use a direct link there to an extensive list of over 130 Victorian

*We hope you enjoy a peaceful and relaxing time over Christmas
and have a healthy and successful year in 2019*

See page 2 for details about our Christmas function on Wednesday 12th December 2018

Our Christmas Function - Wednesday 12th December 2018

This year our Christmas function will be held at the Eltham Senior Citizens' Centre from 8.00pm on Wednesday 12th December 2018. Please note the time has changed from that shown in our annual program.

The format will be varied to encourage a relaxed, fun evening and will include some local history bingo, as well as a Christmas style supper and time to just chat. All members are welcome and we look forward to sharing our end of year celebration with you.



The Man History Forgot by Vivienne Worthington

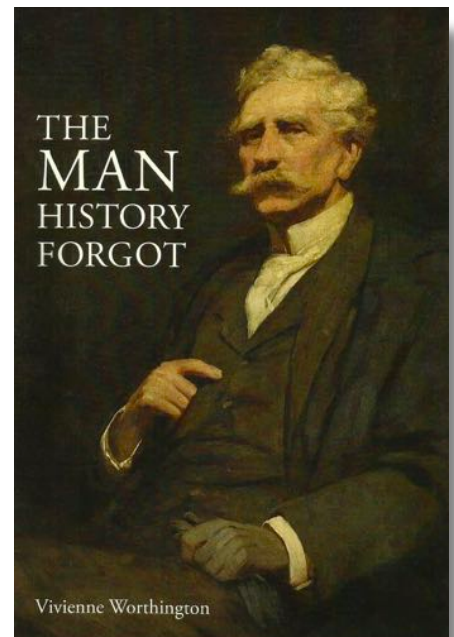
Russell Yeoman

Joseph Anderson Panton (1831 – 1913) was a significant figure in Australian history who had a connection with our local area. He owned land at Eltham in the Laughing Waters area but that was a minor element in his wide-ranging interests and achievements. He is commemorated locally in the name Panton Hill.

Former Panton Hill resident Vivienne Worthington has written about Panton's life and achievements in her book "The Man History Forgot". This is a small book, but it deals in some detail with the many facets of Panton's life. He was a Goldfields Commissioner and official, magistrate, public servant, artist, winemaker, geologist, explorer, speculator, and pioneer pastoralist.

Although he was based in Victoria as a magistrate, he travelled widely throughout Australia including exploration trips in remote areas. His land holdings included large areas in the Kimberly region of Western Australia. A particular focus of the book is his involvement in art matters, both as a painter and administrator.

The author has kindly donated a copy of the book for our Society library.



The Ringing of the Bell

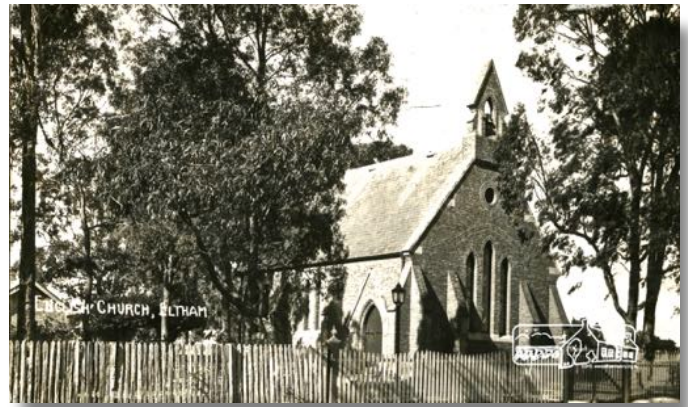
Jim Connor

On Saturday 10th November 2018 a service was held at St Margaret's Church, Eltham to commemorate the centenary of Armistice Day, which marks the signing of the armistice between the Allies of World War 1 and Germany at Compiegne, France for the cessation of hostilities on the Western front of World War 1.

On the 11th November 1918 upon receipt of the news of the signing of the armistice the bell at St Margaret's was set going and was kept ringing for half an hour, until the bell rope broke. In 2018 the same bell was rung before and after the service to remember and recognise the significance of the occasion and honour those from Eltham involved in this conflict.



Sometime in early 1950, we had a visit from the Church of England vicar, the Reverend Robert Long, he asked my mother if we could attend Sunday school and she agreed. The following Sunday a Mrs. Buchanan who lived in Bible Street came in a small car and picked us up and off we went. She was the Sunday school superintendent. The Sunday school was conducted in the Church hall adjacent to St. Margaret's. It was a large ugly wooden building, and written on the side in large writing was, "Morris is a dill", and under that "Morris is a big dill", I wondered who on earth this poor Morris was !



St Margaret's Church, Pitt Street, Eltham
Photograph - EDHS Collection *

There was a small back entrance opposite Pitt Street, and the main entrance was at the side nearest to the Church, up several wooden stairs. This led straight into a small dark kitchen dominated by an enormous urn, the first one I had ever seen, and then through into the main hall. To the left was a platform with a piano at one end, and at the other, a door into a smaller room which during the week was used for Eltham Kindergarten, and on Sundays was used as the room for kindergarten to grade two. This room could also be reached by a ramp from outside and these children entered this way.

Firstly, we all stood together in the hall and sang a hymn accompanied by one of the teachers on the piano. After this the bigger boys moved heavy benches to enclose two corners, one for grades three and four and the other for grades five and six. In each corner two high backed chairs were placed, one for the teacher and one for her books. These boys had the bench moving down to a fine art, they would push a bench across the floor at top speed and then let go, so the bench would fly around in a circle, sometimes with one of them still hanging on at one end, his legs flying and the toes of his clean Sunday shoes scuffing on the floor. This activity was highly dangerous, and I once saw one of the smaller girls knocked over by a flying bench. Mrs. Buchanan would stop whatever she was doing to yell at the boys in question, and they would then meekly push the benches into position, smirking the whole time; they'd had their fun for the morning.

My brother and I were sent to the grade three and four corner, where we were welcomed by our teacher whose name I have forgotten, and my brother sat on one bench with the boys and I sat on the other with the girls. We were given a stamp book and each week a new text stamp to stick in.

In their separate room, at the same time each Sunday we would be disturbed by the Kindergarten class, dropping their pennies into what sounded like a metal collection bowl and singing loudly: "See the pennies dropping, listen while they fall, every one for Jesus He shall have them all."

This bothered my literal mind, and one Sunday I asked my teacher how Jesus could have all the pennies when he was dead. In exasperation at my stupidity she answered, "The money goes to further Jesus's work in the world." Now, I knew all about Jesus's work. We had a beautiful book at home called 'Jesus of Nazareth and 80 pictures by William Hale' and there was a picture of Jesus in His Father's workshop planing down a ploughshare and Joseph at his work bench, so very puzzled I asked, "So does the money for His work in the world go to carpenters?" She looked at me crossly, and said, "No you silly child, to His work with the missionaries." And all the class sniggered sycophantically at my stupidity, including my brother. I narrowed my eyes at him and secretly vowed to bash him up later!!

From 1920 until 1942, Kooringorاما was a classy Guest House in York Street, Eltham, west of Bible Street. It started life in about 1900 as a private house called The Pines, built and owned by John Burgoyne, grandfather of Harry Burgoyne.

Jump to Caulfield. In 1916, Mrs Ethel Boake was matron, and Miss Florence Garner was a nursing sister, at the Red Cross Rest House attached to the Caulfield Military Hospital. Ethel's husband Alfred was an invalid, having been seriously wounded in the Boer War. Florence had been brought up by foster-parents who lived in a "splendid mansion" in Caulfield. In 1919, a school at North Caulfield was converted to a temporary emergency hospital for influenza cases. Ethel Boake was placed in charge and she was joined by several nurses who had worked with her previously, including Florence Garner. When it closed, Ethel and Florence decided to go into partnership by purchasing The Pines at Eltham, which they renamed Kooringorاما. Both women would have been in their forties at the time. The possible involvement of Elsie Halpin (background unknown) is obscure. In 1921 she gave formal notice that her partnership with Ethel Boake and Florence Garner was terminated. But literally the only other reference to Elsie is her death by drowning (possibly suicide resulting from mental illness) in 1930. I would like to know more about Elsie.



Nurses and orderlies standing around hospital beds - Kooringorاما c1920 - Photograph - EDHS Collection

Kooringorاما was initially described as a Rest Home; specifically (in 1920) it was a convalescent home for tuberculosis sufferers. But it soon became a Guest House (which no doubt generated a better income). Despite references to it as the "residence of Mr and Mrs Boake" (which it was), it was owned by Ethel and Florence and it appears that Alfred Boake played no part in its running. Indeed, it was Ethel who obtained Council permission to take some gravel off York Street for use on her driveway. And it was Ethel who negotiated with Council when it was alleged that water for "bathrooms, lavatories, and pigeon houses" had been siphoned off the water main illegally.

Various classified advertisements give an insight into the staffing of the Guest House. Over the years, they sought a "good girl for housework by day", someone to "milk and separate on Saturday afternoons", and "housemaid-waitress wanted, good position, liberal outings".

An advertising poster from 1937 paints an impressive picture of the place, but "river bathing" might have been stretching things a bit. One of the residents between 1930 and 1935 was Frederick Grassick, a teacher at the Eltham Higher Elementary School. Another teacher at the school was Winifred Sedunary; she possibly also boarded at Kooringorاما. They worked together on "the planting of the school grounds, which will in time be a miniature park of ornamental trees and shrubs". They were married in 1935.



Advertisement for Kooringorاما - 1937

Ethel Boake did not confine her activities to the running of the Guest House. She was described as "a wonderful organiser". She served on just about every local committee: St Margaret's Ladies' Guild, Red Cross, Austin Hospital, Australian Women's National League, Eltham War Service Committee, and Eltham Public Hall Committee. Many of the meetings were held at Koorringorama. And she was generous. She lent her "five valve Stromberg Carlson Treasure Chest Receiver" to the Eltham Progress Association so that the public could listen to the opening ceremony of Parliament House in Canberra in 1927. And in 1941 she lent her car to the vicar of St Margaret's after his blue Flying Standard sedan had been stolen

Koorringorama also served as the venue for numerous charitable fund-raising activities, in which Ethel Boake was supported "unobtrusively" by Florence Garner. There was a gymkhana (a fete with sporting events). There was a dance organised by the "Ladies' Cinderella Committee". There was a fancy dress party with "dancing on the verandah to the strains of a gramophone". There was a social evening (guests included Dr. Cordner and Percy Leason) with dancing to "wireless music with electric pick-up". There were cards nights. And bazaars. And afternoon teas. And fetes with a "real Gypsy soothsayer". There was even a mock trial at which the Eltham Shire President Cr Bradbury conducted a "Court of Injustice" at which he fined a fellow councillor for "loitering".

In 1928, Eric Lyall, who was Ethel Boake's nephew, founded an amateur film production company called Koorringorama Films (usually so spelt). Their first film was "Borrowed Plumes."

Eric, who was living at Koorringorama at the time, was the cameraman and many of the actors were known locally. Ethel Boake appeared in one film (under her maiden name Ethel Carr) and some scenes were filmed at Koorringorama. The story of Koorringorama Films has been extensively covered in earlier EDHS newsletters (November 2014 and March 2015).



A scene from "Borrowed Plumes" (National Library of Australia)

One Sunday in 1926, Eric came home to find that his pet kangaroo, for which he held a permit, was missing. Later, two men were charged with shooting a kangaroo at Research on the Saturday and lifting it into their car. But charges were dropped when the only witness admitted that he couldn't be sure what he'd seen.

Koorringorama was put up for sale in 1938, but negotiations fell through. Alfred Boake died in 1940. Koorringorama was sold in 1942 to Mr and Mrs Gallagher, and it is thought that its name then reverted to The Pines. In the 1950s it was bought by Alistair Knox.

Ethel and Florence left the Eltham area, but remained very close. Ethel died in 1954. Her death notice described her as "loving friend of Florence Garner". Florence died just six weeks later.

Sources: Very many newspaper articles, too numerous to list.

Thanks to Wendy Abey for providing background information about Florence Garner and photos.

A year or so after arriving in Eltham, I became involved in St Margaret's Church of England in Pitt Street. I became a religious instruction teacher, taking classes five days a week at the Eltham Primary School. We were also involved in the Church's 100-year celebration parade down the main street of Eltham, celebrating Eltham and the surrounding district. I believe that the first church service was held on a diagonal block of land on a corner across from the hotel, and the land the church is on was once an Aboriginal corroboree ground. Aboriginal people lived under a huge tree, close to Main Road and Dalton Street, sadly the tree has since been cut down.

St Margaret's Church had a connection with St Mary's Orphanage in Alice Springs. A friend and I began to care for an Aboriginal child each for six weeks each year. Two years running we took our fostered charges and our children to the Heinz factory for a tour and a big bag of Heinz samples.

My friend had a VW beetle (a small car in case there's anyone on Earth who doesn't know), and we packed all the children into this little car. We put two children into the little luggage section behind the back seat. Three children sat on the back seat, an extra child sat on the knees of one adult, two children sat on the knees of the other two in the back seat. We had ten people in that little car! Of course this was well before the law dictated how many passengers could sit in a car, mandatory seat belts and laws preventing young children sitting in the front.



Old VW beetle travelling east in Bridge Street, Eltham corner of Main Road c1968 - Photograph - EDHS Collection *

It was now 1963. One morning I woke to find a car, occupied by two men, parked beside our little house. I approached to find out why they were there. They explained they were detectives, showed me their badges and asked me not to approach them again. They were well hidden by some tall trees and were keeping watch on a man living a few doors down in Reichelt Avenue. I never found out why, but they were there until long after dark.

Another incident I remember happened at the clothesline, about eight yards away from the house. One day, while hanging clothes out, I heard a rustle in the grass a few yards further on. Looking in that direction, I saw a seven-foot long brown snake heading straight for me. It was about four inches thick, so, dropping the washing, I ran quickly to the house, jumping the four steps in two jumps. I ran into the bedroom, where I kept my gun in the wardrobe and put a cartridge in each barrel. I ran back to the door to see the thing, a couple of yards away, still coming. I fired each barrel, one at a time. I hit it twice, watching it spring into the air, twisting and turning and then vanishing under the house. This meant that if we left the house on that side, we had to take a leap and jump well over the open steps, as it could have bitten us if we had walked down these steps.

I have to say, snakes are very easy to kill as they only need a hit and they die. So, after my shots, this one turned up dead a few days later, amongst the building materials of a house being constructed across the road - I'm sure they had a surprise.

As previously mentioned, early in 1963 we left the tiny fibro cottage and moved into the Stanhope Street house. As we now had plenty of room we fostered a young girl named Eileen from St Mary's in Alice Springs to come and live with us. Eileen was about 13. I bought her a uniform for Eltham High School and she quickly became part of our happy family, with my twin boys enjoying having an older "sister" who took them to the Eltham Theatre for the Saturday matinee and spent hours shooting hoops.

I took a part-time job as a nurse in the Judge Book elderly citizens' home. One of the staff I worked with wanted to get married to her fiancé, but neither had any money to pay for a wedding. I set up the large lounge and the dining room and they were married there, with the help of the minister of St Margaret's. I never saw them again, after they left for their honeymoon, I hope life treated them well.

Our Stanhope Street house had rendered walls painted white. They needed something on them, so I then began to look for paintings. I ended up becoming friends with many of our local artists, especially Sonya Skipper and her partner Joe Hannan. Sonya made beautiful small terra cotta sculptures mounted on blocks of wood. Joe painted and made delicious seafood omelettes. There was a plot of land on the side of Main Road, past the village, as we still called the shopping centre, at the bottom of Zig Zag Road, which the Hassells, who lived on Zig Zag Road, set up as Hassells' Roadside Art Gallery. It was a landmark for a time as Ian Hassell made a large plaster sculpture of a discus thrower, which was mounted in the middle and easily visible from Main Road. Their home was above the gallery, on the first "zig" in the road. We became friends. We shared a lot of meals with the Hannans/Skippers, alternating between their house in Parsons Road and ours in Stanhope Street. Our house was a long single story while Sonya's and Joe's was a double storey provincial style with dormers in the roof. My sons were quite jealous of their son Mervyn as he had a trapdoor in his bedroom floor that led down to the room below! Sonya invited Alan Marshall for dinner on a night the boys and I were there. I was writing articles at the time for the Red Cross magazine and Alan advised me to study under a Professor that he knew. I remember Alan being happy about having a fossilised Dinosaur egg. Alan liked playing chess with my boys. When we met at Sonya's the boys, aged nine, both played against him. Sometimes they won, did he let them?



Photograph - EDHS Collection *

I met Neil Douglas, who also became a friend. He painted bush scenes on ceramic plates of all sizes. When we first met him he lived near the corner of Main Road and Dalton Street, renting a house from another artist for two years before moving out toward Diamond Creek.

By then we had fostered another girl from St Mary's. Her name was Bertha. Another family had fostered her first but they wouldn't let her go to school; she was made to stay in the house doing the cleaning. That's when her sister called me. She had heard that our other foster child Eileen was very happy staying with us. Would I assist her sister Bertha? Bertha's sister was known as the lass who played Jedda in the Australian film. She later entered the church, through St Mary's, and became known as Sister Rosemary.

Neil Douglas was fascinated by the stories the aboriginal foster girls told him, quite a few times inviting us to lunch. Once, just after Christmas, we went to Neil's for lunch and received a small present each as his family celebrated Christmas late.

We time travel back to Saturday, May 3rd, 1941 and the property 'Abington' (now known as 'Araluen') on the Old Eltham Road, Lower Plenty; home of Mrs Annie Castledine. It is morning and the weather is fine with a slight northerly breeze; the sun is out warming the dew off the grass following a chilly and foggy start to the day of 43 degrees (6° C) at 7am. The sun will heat the day up to a pleasant 68 (20° C) at noon but that is the only warmth to be brought to the Castledine homestead that day.

Passing through the front gate and heading up the drive, a young lad in postal office uniform, cap on head, pedals his bike up the hill. The telegram delivery boy; an unfortunate scene, and a symbol of fear, stabbing directly to the hearts of every mother, wife, father, brother, sister or child unfortunate enough to witness it.

Annie has heard and seen him approaching; his bicycle bell rattling as he passes over the ruts and corrugations in the drive, small puffs of dust falling from behind his wheels. She comes to the front door to greet him, her heart pounding with fear.



The Castledine family home at 226 Old Eltham Road, Lower Plenty
EDHS collection

The boy dismounts and places his bike on its stand with respect rather than just dropping it. He wipes a bead of sweat off his forehead, straightens his cap and dusts himself down slightly. He too advances towards her but tries not to catch her eye. For unlike the slightest glimmer of hope Annie may hold, he knows what he is delivering.

He asks Annie quietly, "Mrs Annie Castledine?" Annie reaches her hand out towards him and he gently hands the sealed telegram to her. Still trying to avoid eye contact, he backs away and says, "I'm very sorry". He quietly gets back on his bike and rides away though Annie cannot see him anymore, her eyes are full of tears.

"It is with deep regret that I have to inform you that VX10044 Sapper G. E. Castledine has been killed in action April 18th & desire to convey to you the profound sympathy of the Minister for the Army and the Military Board.

– Minister for the Army"



Telegram, Victoria Barracks, Melbourne to Mrs Annie Castledine, Old Eltham Road, Lower Plenty, 3 May 1941. The telegram is oil stained as it was kept by George's brother Sid, in his toolbox. (Digital scan of the original held in a private collection; EDHS collection)

George is the first soldier from the Shire of Eltham to be killed in the war. He was engaged to Miss Jean Simonson of Montmorency and was going to turn 27 in just two week's time. He had much to live for. His older brother Sid, 28, enlisted only four week's ago.

Annie's world and those of her other children are changed forever.

Sapper George Ernest Castledine (1914-1941), son of Arthur Frederick (dec.) and Annie Castledine, enlisted 23 January 1940 at Lower Plenty and was assigned to the 2/2 Field Company. He is buried in the Phaleron War Cemetery, Athens, Greece and is remembered on the Roll of Honour located in the Eltham War Memorial Hall.

George's brother Sid, upon his discharge from active duty was to keep that fateful telegram in his tool box, a personal place near and dear to him, for the remainder of his life.

It is in memory of George and all the other fallen soldiers of our district that the Eltham Women's Auxiliary first banded together to raise funds for the establishment of the Eltham War Memorial buildings as a living memorial to *'be a constant reminder of those who fought for us and the little ones for whom they fought and died.'*

Lest We Forget

*"They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them."*



ROLL OF HONOUR	
1914-1918	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sgt. George Williams Sgt. Reginald E. Sims L/Cpl. George Moore L/Cpl. Henry G. Philips L/Cpl. John C. Bell Pte. Geoffrey Grant Pte. George Sommerville Pte. George Brown Pte. John Brown Pte. William Bond Pte. Thomas Cameron Pte. Alfred Cassells Pte. Robert Meadows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pte. Walter Mosley Pte. James Pryor Pte. William Prior Pte. Edward Barrett Pte. William Crellin Pte. Henry Norman Pte. Edward Bird Pte. Arthur Brown Pte. Roslyn Stevens Pte. Herbert Creed Pte. Charles Bromfield Pte. Kenneth Sharp Pte. Henry McAlary
1939-1945	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capt. S.M. Gahan Plt. Off. D. Rutter Flt. Off. D.H. Rutter Flt. Sgt. S.M. Mclean Flt. Sgt. L. Ingram Sgt. C.D. Dunlop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cpl. T. Feldbauer Cpl. A.C. Clerke Spr. G.E. Castledine Pte. J. Butherway Pte. K.F. Field

Soldiers of the Shire of Eltham remembered on the Eltham Roll of Honour for their supreme sacrifice; located in the Eltham War Memorial Hall

Reference: 1941 'OBITUARY' Eltham and Whittlesea Shires Advertiser (Vic.:1940 – 1942), 9 May, p.2., viewed 24 Oct 2018, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5749430>

Article originally published in the Throwback Thursday feature (8/11/2018) - EDHS website at <http://www.elthamhistory.org.au>

The Eltham District Historical Society is delighted to welcome Shillinglaw Cafe and Restaurant as a sponsor of our society. If you are looking for a pleasant garden venue for your function, party or celebration, with tasty house made eats, craft beers and local wines, you could visit the historic Shillinglaw Cottage in Panther Place, Eltham.

**Please support our sponsors
they support our Society**



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