

Newsletter

No. 261 December 2021



Well....things have been somewhat different....again !

Jim Connor

This time last year I wrote about how 2020 had been somewhat different due to the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had as it spread across the world. Well, as we now look back on 2021 we can perhaps repeat ourselves, as once again this pandemic has continued to change our lives. We wonder what 2022 will bring and hope, with the recent removal of restrictions, for a noticeable uplift from what we have been experiencing.

Again our Eltham District Historical Society has unfortunately been restricted from holding meetings or excursions, or accessing our Local History Centre. This has been disappointing as we have not been able to directly connect with our members, as we would like to do. Fortunately, some members have been able to continue to work from home to help with the day to day EDHS operations. Like any organisation there is so much that happens behind the scenes that is often unseen.

In future years, as we look back to this time we may realise what a historically significant period we have all been living through and how life as we had known it would never be the same again.

As John F. Kennedy is credited with saying:
History is a relentless master. It has no present, only the past rushing into the future. To try to hold fast is to be swept aside.

One outstanding highlight throughout the past year has been the ongoing restoration of the Eltham Courthouse, which has been completed. We are very fortunate as it now provides a refreshed c1860 building to be appreciated by our community and others, for many years to come.

This would not have achieved without the support of Nillumbik Shire Council and the dedicated commitment of each of the individuals who were actively and passionately involved with this project.

We thank you for restoring our history.



Eltham Courthouse - October 2021

Photograph - Jim Connor

We wish you all good health and hope you enjoy a peaceful and relaxing time over the holiday season, as we now look forward to being able to meet up in 2022

Christmas Island is so named because it was first sighted on Christmas Day. I had assumed that the same was true of Christmas Hills. I was wrong.

David Christmas was a Welshman who was transported to Van Diemen's Land in 1822, having been convicted of stealing a quantity of gold, silver and banknotes. Despite originally being given a life sentence, and despite receiving lashes for insubordination and insolence, he was granted a free pardon in 1826. Shortly afterwards, a Mr Oakes employed him and two other men to clear land along the Plenty River (a tributary of the Derwent), but the three absconded without completing the work. Oakes placed a notice in the local paper warning others not to employ them. In 1829, David was fined for assaulting a church sexton at the door of the church during a service.

In 1836 he came to Melbourne, accompanying sheep being transported on a schooner. Then in 1842, farmer Joseph Stevenson, who owned a 9600-acre sheep station "Wyenondable Hills" at Watsons Creek, was seeking a shepherd. David got the job. Stevenson gave David directions on how to get to the junction of Watsons Creek and Five Mile Creek, but David became hopelessly lost in the dense bush. He wandered for several days before eventually finding his way out after hearing the bells on Stevenson's bullocks.

This led to David Christmas becoming something of a celebrity in the area: by the mid-1840s local residents were calling the sheep run Christmas Hills. He continued to work as a shepherd, living in a small hut off One Tree Hill Road beside Five Mile Creek. When David died, he was buried there in a bush grave.



Unveiling of the plaque 11 October 1992
Photograph - EDHS Collection



Plaque in memory of David Christmas
Photograph - EDHS Collection

In 1992, exactly 150 years after his arrival in the area, the people of Christmas Hills unveiled a memorial plaque on the site. A Welsh song "We'll Keep a Welcome on the Hillside" was played and a toast was drunk in remembrance of the Welsh shepherd.

An inscription on the plaque reads:

"From this humble shepherd these hills have gained their name"

But did he really deserve such praise?

Sources: Diamond Valley News 20/12/2000 (citing Mick Woiwod); private research by Helen Reichenbach.

A practicing artist, Ian Hassell also supplemented his income by teaching art at Rosanna High School in the early 1960s.

In April 1970 Ian was profiled in *The Australian Women's Weekly*. At age 71, he was described as handsome with distinguished white hair, smooth tanned skin and deep blue twinkling eyes. Described as a sculptor and book illustrator, he claimed himself as a traditional artist. He painted mainly landscapes, striking bush settings with exquisite gum trees.

Ian died a few months later in October 1970. Following a service at St Margaret's Church Ian was buried in Eltham Cemetery.

Joan Eleanor Maud Stevens was born in London in 1910. In 1921, under the stage name Joan Dare - she was promoted in newspapers as a "versatile vocalist and dancer" as part of a musical line-up in the town of Whitstable in Kent. In 1928 *The Bioscope*, an illustrated weekly dedicated to the early years of cinema featured a photo of Joan and by the following year she was again featured in *Tatler* described as a "newcomer to the British Films, but well known in cabaret and musical comedy". Films included "The Celestial city", 1929 and "The Inseparables", 1929. (They were silent films)

She married at age 16, (with the permission of her father who was a lawyer) and with her husband started a school of ballroom dancing. After two sons, and four years, the couple were divorced.

During WW2, Joan also enlisted and was a third officer in the Women's Royal Naval Service. She later taught at the London Institute of Beauty Culture and when she first arrived in Australia had planned on setting up a beauty parlour here. It is presumed that she left her sons back in England.

After Ian's death and 38 years of marriage, Joan continued operating the open-air gallery but by 1977, she had moved to Canterbury. The Gallery later became known as Hassall's Gallery & Antiques and Hassall's Gallery Bazaar (antiques, furniture, curios bought and sold). It operated through to the early 1990s. Joan passed away 33 years after her husband, at age 92, in February 2003. Probate records indicate her occupation as art director and residence as Eltham. She was buried with her husband Ian in Eltham cemetery.

In July 2003, the property was sold for \$550,000. In March 2012 it sold again for \$790,000.

Photographs taken in March 2014 of the property illustrate it had been derelict and neglected for some years, but the willows were still there and there were signs of the stone quarry and bridge. At one stage before that a shipping container had sat near the entrance. Vegetation and rubbish had taken over the site.

In February 2016, the property was listed for sale once again but did not sell. In May 2016 the property was on two titles being offered as one on a land area of 1.4 hectares and promoted as a development opportunity. In November 2016 planning approval was submitted to the Shire of Nillumbik for buildings and works to construct 4 dwellings with associated vegetation removal. This may have been denied. In July 2017 planning approval was submitted to the Nillumbik Shire Council for buildings and works to construct a dwelling and associated vegetation removal. That has also not proceeded, and an extension of time was applied for as of 16 August 2021.

Meanwhile the property remains neglected and devoid of any recognition that it was once the site of Australia's first open-air gallery and home to two remarkable people who contributed to the unique artistic culture and heritage of Eltham.

Contact us for a full list of sources including historical newspapers.

Visit <http://www.elthamhistory.org.au/> for the full article and additional photographs.

'Hi, I am cleaning out a relative's house and found a copy of 'The Mercury', from the Eltham Higher Elementary School. December, 1949. Autographs on back page. I'm happy to donate it to the Society if wanted. Regards, James.'

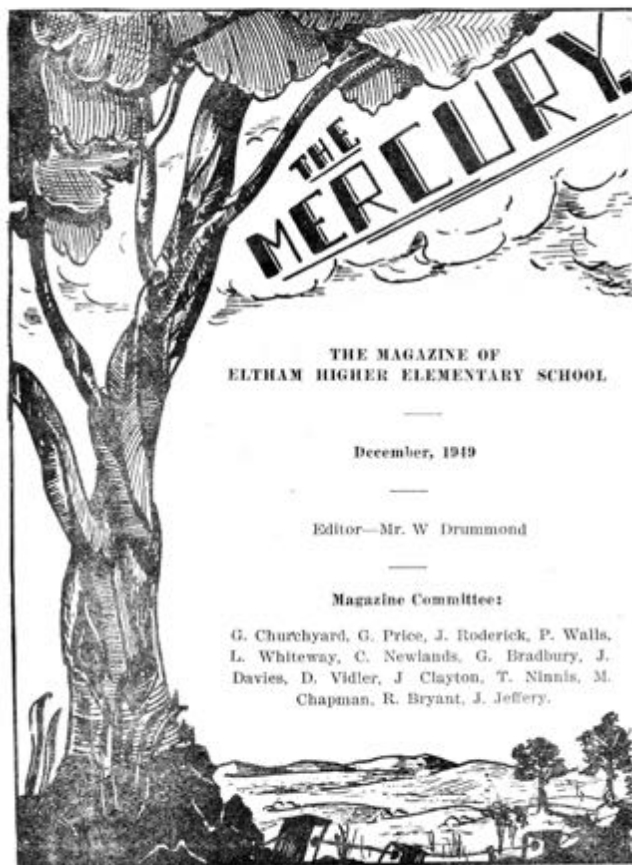
Well, when we received such a message on our EDHS Facebook page we definitely were interested and were very pleased to then have this magazine mailed to our Local History Centre. As this magazine was found in a house in country Victoria it shows how our website, Facebook and other social media enables a wider awareness of EDHS and our activities.

What we did not know until we looked at this edition of 'The Mercury', was that 1949 was the last year of this school, as in 1950 it transitioned to become the Eltham High School.

Included in the editorial in the magazine are the following words:

'It has been a year of change and development. We have seen for example, the numerous improvements relating to the school grounds and accommodation and we can prepare for further changes next year. We look forward with pride and enthusiasm to 1950, when staff and pupils will have the honour of assembling at Eltham High School, and we offer our good wishes to those teachers and pupils who will be coming to the new Eltham High School for the first time next year.'

This magazine is a valuable reflection on those changing times and also includes a page of autographs, as well as a number of advertisements from supporting local traders, which help capture the business community, seventy-two years ago.



POST OFFICE STORE — Phone Eltham 63

J. N. BURGOYNE & SONS

General Storekeepers, Ice and Fuel Merchants

Orders Called for and Delivered

Lyon Bros. Eltham Motor Garage

R.A.C.V. Road Service Station

Cars For Hire — Oils and Accessories
New Tyres — Bus Service

All Classes of Repairs

Phone — — — — — **Eltham 18 & 37**

Briar Hill Timber & Trading Co.

**SHERBOURNE ROAD,
BRIAR HILL**

Hardware, Joinery and all Building Materials
Phone JL7207 and JL7250

Phone Eltham 148.

CELINA CAFE

Three-Course Lunch — Grills at all hours
Milk Bar, Confectionery, Home-made Cakes
Sponges, Pies

A trial will satisfy — — **A. J. & E. JACKSON**

The first part of this article was published in our August newsletter.

Ian Jelbart, the son of Ron and Yvonne, along with his wife and two small children moved into the Barn in the mid-1970s. As an architect he was able to upgrade the primitive facilities and make it a liveable house. Up until then all the floors had been accessed by ladders through trapdoors, some of which remain. There were no stairs. He subsequently installed a spiral staircase from the entrance foyer up to a mezzanine floor set in the dramatic high-pitched roof over the kitchen and lounge area. Above the kitchen was a main bedroom and ensuite, with a gangway walk to an office at the western end. This left the dining area with a towering roof overhead.

In the early forties Ron and Yvonne bought some 240 acres of land here. They kept it in one parcel until they sold it to Development Underwriting in the mid-sixties, except the top ten acres for the Barn and the Manor house. The rest was then developed as the Woodridge Estate.

In our renovations and subsequent major extension, we had to follow the same historical footprint for the building, as much as possible, to be consistent with heritage advice.

We had to renew all the plumbing and wiring. The original wiring was just channelled into the mud brick walls. Any time an electrician came to do anything it all had to be pulled out and reinstalled with proper conduit, then sealed up again.

Many things like that had to be done to make it compliant with current regulations. It is now a very liveable house. We liked the location of the main bedroom at the mezzanine level, it was a great place to sleep and was just a beautiful view up there. On planning towards getting older we wanted an area which was easily accessible and big enough for a wheelchair, so we built a new bedroom, bathroom and shower and installed a lift. It is all part of our reasoning to try to stay here until we are carted away.

Heritage advisors to the Nillumbik Council indicated it was important any design next to an historic house does not mimic but complements it. We would have liked to use mud bricks to build the new extension, but it is brick veneer and rendered to look like mud brick. Council said thermal characteristics would require us to remove every old steel window. Not only did we believe this would ruin the historic character of the house, but it would have been prohibitive in cost.

The house is basically original, though we've re-built the kitchen and levelled a floor out, which had been sinking. The dining room is one room where there has been no change whatsoever. We just moved our furniture and cabinets in. It has a shearing shed floor still showing lanolin from sheep wool embedded in the hardwood.

We open up the studio and workshop on occasion for the Nillumbik Artists' Studios. This is in the original cow shed where I have some historical photos on the wall, including of Ron and Yvonne Jelbart building the place. They made 60,000 mud bricks – the women made them apparently.

We have some of the tools left behind and photos of the various stages of the building, as well as an appraisal by Alistair Knox. He said, "as the two largest mud brick buildings in Eltham, beautifully built, it is just a pity that they didn't display a bit of whimsy". That was Alistair!

It took us years to get rid of the accumulated building materials left that were no longer of use.

The front of our property goes down to the line of Wendy's citrus trees along the private road up to the Manor House. Wendy's young years were in Wentworth. They had a fruit block there, so we had to have citrus trees.

It is a beautiful place. We feel very privileged to own it and live here.

One morning when I was sleeping after working night duty as a nurse, I got my baby to sleep and fell deeply asleep only to be woken by loud voices and chopping noises on our land. I staggered outside to find several men making their way along the length of our property chopping shrubs as they went. When they refused to desist I threatened them with a rifle. It turned out they were from the Council and were planning to turn an intermittent creek running through our land into a barrel drain.

There was actually an easement in place but I had been given no notice of their intentions. They did return later and built the drain. They covered the whole area with loads of soil to give us much more usable land. Subsequent owners used that area to build a tennis court and recently it has been subdivided and several houses built there.

After my first baby was born in 1967, I formed a partnership with Lesley Vuillermin. Lesley, her husband Ray, and myself had all been in the same class at Eltham High. We pooled our meagre resources and opened the first "Country Art Store" in an old building on the corner of Main Road and Franklin Street. Ray, a pilot, was a great help. He flew in Buka Baskets from New Guinea, Pottery from China and even small Huon pine pieces of furniture from Tasmania. We loved every minute of it but then a charming lady customer backed into a fire hydrant in Franklin Street next to our side wall. The water blew sky high then cascaded onto our roof and eventually the ceiling fell in accompanied by many years of grime and filth. Lesley just had time to grab her 18 month old daughter and flee to the butcher's shop on the opposite side of the main road.

The butcher rang the fire brigade but by the time they turned off the fire hydrant our stock was ruined. We recovered. Insurance replaced the stock but we never really settled into that building again and when the old barber's shop next to Eltham station became available we moved to a new location. Lesley had another baby and with Ray working irregular hours she couldn't cope so she sold her share to Caroline Shenton who was a neighbour of mine.

We built a gallery behind the shop in what had been a corrugated iron residence which had housed the barber, his wife and five children. Max laid a brick floor over the cracked concrete, then with the addition of antique furniture, local paintings and Persian rugs which we hung on the walls, we launched the "Nillumbik Gallery". At first we sourced much of the pottery from potters at "Dunmoochin" in Cottles Bridge, but later we travelled all over Victoria to buy pottery.

In the late 1960s we were singlehandedly responsible for clothing the many 'Hippies' in the area with sandals, Kurtas and Kaftans and supplying them with jewellery, headbands and masses of incense.

When we moved into the shop we covered the rotten boards with seagrass matting but when customers started sinking through huge holes in the boards, we had to close the shop again and pump truckloads of concrete in to make a new floor.



Pam Robinson and Caroline Shenton
Photograph - Diamond Vally News
8 February 1993

During the early 1970s we were also extending our house in Diamond Street. We had plans drawn up by John Pizzey who worked with Alistair Knox. We couldn't find anyone prepared to build in Pisé (rammed earth) so we settled on Mud bricks. Pat Begg and a friend got advice from Horrie Judd and set off to excavate and build with only hand tools and a lot of muscle.

Max laid another brick floor and we lined the internal walls with wood from inside an old cool-store which was being demolished in Templestowe. We were lucky to find a tiler who was a real craftsman. He found old Welsh slates which married the old and new roofs together beautifully. For obvious reasons we built the new section above flood level.

The business survived from the 60s through the 70s and 80s until we sold in the early 90s. After changing hands a couple of times it has now morphed into a coffee shop and café.

I still visit Eltham regularly and although the main areas are congested with masses of traffic controlled by numerous traffic lights, there are still little pockets of interesting mud buildings to be found if you search for them.

* *The Country Arts Store was the first place to sell jewellery created by Michael Wilson.*

Annual General Meeting - 24th November 2021

Our Society created our own piece of local history on 24th November 2021 when we held our first Annual General Meeting on line via Zoom.

This was attended by many of our members who voted to elect the following office bearers and committee members for 2021-2022:

President	Jim Connor
Senior Vice-President	Peter Pidgeon
Junior Vice-President	Liz Pidgeon
Treasurer / Membership Secretary	Robert Marshall
Society Secretary	Russell Yeoman
Committee Members - Irene Kearsey, Tony Brocksopp, Joan Castledine, Alison Delaney, Richard Pinn, Andrew Lemon.	

While it has been a challenging year with limited opportunities to meet as a committee we do thank all committee members for being involved and look forward to their contributions to the future operation of the Eltham District Historical Society.

BOYS! Why Travel to City Daily? ELTHAM PARK CAFE

An interesting and remunerative position awaits you at GEORGE LOVITT'S ENGINEERING WORKS (in Sherbourne Rd., Montmorency) on High-Class Precision Work

Call, phone, or write — — — — — JL7280

Devonshire Teas
Grills, Lunches, Confectionery, Ice Creams, Hot Dinners Sunday

Phone Eltham 68 — — C. KOHLER, Prop.

Advertisements from the 1949 edition of The Mercury - the magazine of the Eltham Higher Elementary School

Brougham Street was created in Josiah Holloway's 1851 subdivision of Little Eltham. It was one of several east-west streets shown on the subdivision plan as crossing the Diamond Creek. The western part was originally named Wellington Street.

It is not known when the first bridge was constructed in Brougham Street however it was certainly mentioned at Council's meeting of 2 June 1884 as being in a dangerous state of repair. This photo (c.1895) of an old bridge shows a very low-level simple log girder bridge crossing the creek at a right angle. This bridge was generally known as Kaylocks Bridge or Kaylock's Crossing after the owner of the adjoining land. It was most likely built from around the mid-1850s, or a crossing of some fashion was established, by Richard George Kaylock, butcher of Little Eltham, who with his wife Emily Ann settled there in 1854. His property was in Wellington Street (now Brougham Street) and apparently extended across the Diamond Creek. The land on the western side was farmed, the house being on the eastern side.



Kaylocks Bridge c1895
Photograph - EDHS collection

Kaylock's Bridge formed part of the original coach road to Eltham and in 1922 was described as an "old rustic bridge". Its low level and insubstantial construction made it susceptible to flood damage, necessitating frequent closures until repairs could be carried out.

In September 1922, Council called for tenders for a new timber bridge to be constructed at Kaylock's Crossing. An engineering assessment carried out for the Council by Macleod Consulting, at the time of the replacement, based on construction details suggested it was built in the 1900s, however this dating could possibly have been the result of numerous repairs undertaken over the years to repair flood damage.

The tender was awarded to Mr Weller of Kangaroo Ground who commenced work in February 1923 on a higher-level timber trestle bridge. Work was slowed due to illness of the contractor and the accidental death of a man in March 1923, following the collapse of the bank after he had jumped into a hole that had just been blasted. The bridge was completed around July 1923 at which point the old structure was pulled up, marking what was described in the 'Advertiser' newspaper as the passing of an old and well-loved landmark in the district.

In April 1924 the approach to Kaylocks Bridge was washed away during the heavy flooding that destroyed the Main Road bridge. The western side was repaired, and an extra span added to the eastern side using timber from the destroyed Main Road bridge. The bridge was again severely damaged, four months later in August 1924.

When a lack of finances delayed repairs to the Bridge Street bridge in 1931 (also known at the time as Obelisk Bridge), traffic had to detour via Brougham Street for some time. Local residents feared the Bridge Street bridge might never reopen.

Kaylocks Bridge was constantly subject to damage by floods. In the record setting 1934 flood it was submerged by two feet of water. In more recent times the bridge was again severely damaged by flooding and repairs made. A new bridge and adjoining footbridge were constructed in 2009.

This story is the last of a series about the lives of people interred at the Eltham Cemetery.

Robert David Taylor

Bob Taylor was a farmer who lived in Eltham all his life. For 58 years he was Secretary of the Order of Rechabites, keeping the lodge books and attending to all the correspondence. He was a keen worker for social activities, particularly the welfare of Australian soldiers during the First World War; his efforts were largely responsible for the erection of the War Memorial at the corner of Main Road and Bridge Street (since re-located). He was an Eltham Shire Councillor between 1911 and 1920 and was Shire President for a time. His lifetime reminiscences were published in the local paper in 1932. But it seems that there may have been another side to Bob Taylor ...

In 1914, he wanted to subdivide his land. Plans were submitted to Council and were approved, but the subdivision did not proceed. In 1919, he doctored the plans to make it appear that a totally different subdivisional arrangement had been approved. The Titles Office immediately detected fraud, and the Crown charged him with forgery and counterfeiting. But charges were later dropped (reason not recorded).

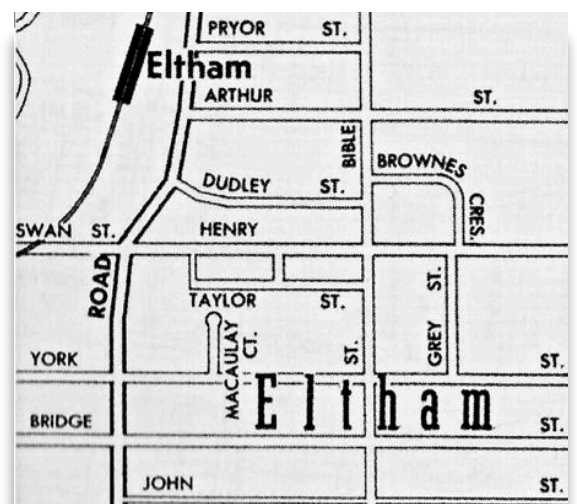
In 1920, Council charged Cr Taylor with illegally felling 91 eucalyptus trees in Eltham Park (60% of them in a healthy condition), presumably to be sold as firewood. He was imprisoned pending trial. He claimed that he had acquired from another man the right to remove timber and sued the Council for wrongful prosecution. The case eventually went to the State Full Court, with judgement given in favour of the Council, on the grounds that any right acquired by Taylor covered only the removal of logs and refuse, not sound green timber. And his position as Councillor precluded him from acquiring the right anyway.

In 1933, Mr and Mrs Bowman lived in York Street. Bob Taylor owned adjoining farming land. He subdivided his land, the plan showing a proposed new thoroughfare (Grey Street) flanked by residential blocks for sale. Mrs Bowman bought one, as her family would then be able to walk through the vacant block and along Grey Street to Henry Street, thus providing quicker access to the railway station.

But Bob Taylor retained ownership of Grey Street itself. He fenced it off at each end and charged the Bowmans with trespass when they used it. The matter went to Court. The ruling was that Mrs Bowman could use Grey Street, as she owned land in it, but her husband could not. (Taylor also accused the Bowmans of having broken the fences, but could not prove it.)

Bob Taylor died in 1934 at the age of 76. He is buried in Eltham Cemetery with his wife Charlotte and a daughter Lillian (Lily).

Main sources: Eltham Advertiser 31/10/1919 and 30/4/1920, The Age 15/11/1921 and 27/10/1933, Hurstbridge Advertiser 7/12/1934



Map from 1956 UBD Street Directory

This is the last of a series of 35 Eltham Cemetery Stories researched and written by Richard Pinn. We appreciate his active contributions to recording our local history.

In these challenging times
for local businesses it is
even more important to
support our local sponsors
— they support our Society

Eltham District Historical Society - contacts

- **Jim Connor, President**
0418 379 497 – edhshistory@gmail.com
- **Russell Yeoman, Society Secretary**
9439 9717 – edhsoffice@gmail.com
- **Robert Marshall, Treasurer / Membership Secretary**
edhstreasurer@gmail.com

Our postal address is 728 Main Road, Eltham 3095

We appreciate the generous support we receive from Nillumbik Shire Council, including the recent quick response grant of \$1100 to assist with provision of banners for use inside the Eltham Courthouse, as well as our annual heritage grant of \$600, which assists with the operation of our Local History Centre



**Printed by courtesy of Vicki Ward MP,
State Member for Eltham**

*Any images displayed in this newsletter from the Shire of Eltham Pioneers Photograph Collection are held in partnership between Eltham District Historical Society and Yarra Plenty Regional Library (Eltham Library)

LAND SURVEYORS ✓
TOWN PLANNING ✓
PROJECT MANAGEMENT ✓

webstergroup.com.au (03) 9439 4222

shillinglaw
café & restaurant

shillinglaw.com.au

morrison kleeman Estate Agents 

Eltham | Greensborough | Doreen

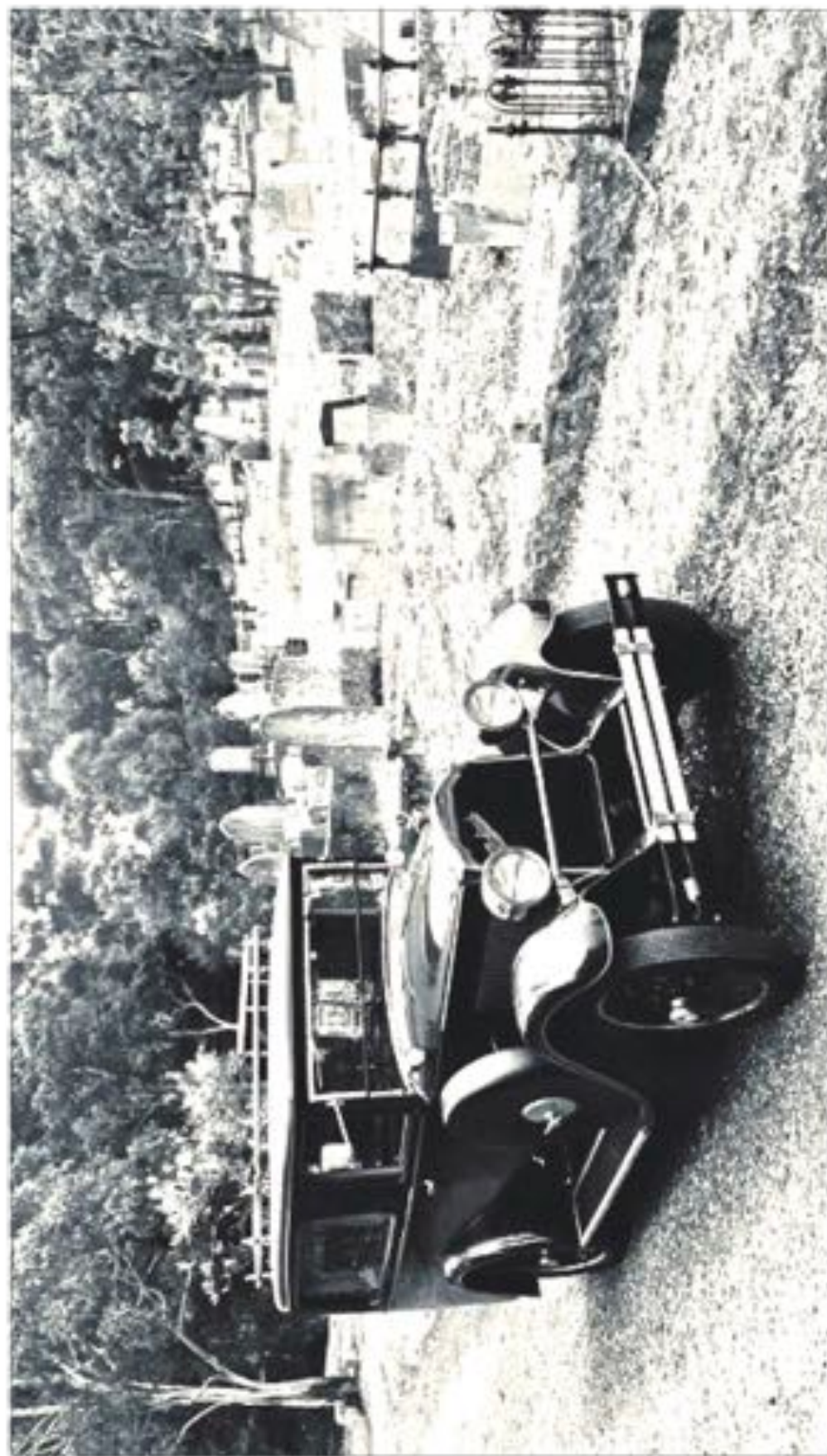
Gayle Blackwood 0408 776 070

Eltham and District
Community Bank® Branch

 **Bendigo Bank**

MICHAEL WILSON
DIAMOND JEWELLERS

www.michaelwilson.com.au



ELTHAM CEMETERY

EST. 1858

Burial Grounds: Mt Pleasant Road, Eltham
www.elthamcemetery.com



Our Eltham, Our History

For further information contact Rita:

The Secretary, P.O. Box 423, Eltham VIC 3095

Ph: (03) 9432 1963 Email: admin@elthamcemetery.com