



No. 268 February 2023

History is....

Jim Connor

“History is the study of change over time, and it covers all aspects of human society. Political, social, economic, scientific, technological, medical, cultural, intellectual, religious and military developments are all part of history.” **

This is but one definition of history. In that context it is interesting to consider the history of the “Spanish” influenza pandemic that killed an estimated 50 million people about a hundred years ago; then look back just a couple of years to 2019 when, shortly afterwards, we were confronted with another worldwide pandemic, this time COVID -19 and subsequent variants. After first being reported in Wuhan, China, it then spread globally to become the fifth documented pandemic since the 1918 influenza pandemic.



A group of people taking precautions against the ‘Spanish’ Flu
Photograph - Internet source

As of 9 January 2023, this pandemic had caused more than 664 million cases and 6.7 million confirmed deaths, making it one of the deadliest respiratory diseases in history. It has triggered severe social and economic disruption around the world, including the largest global recession since the Great Depression. Locally, it effected how we operated our society, including with changes required to committee, meeting and excursion arrangements.

The emergence of diseases with pandemic potential, including cholera, bubonic plague, smallpox etc., have occurred regularly throughout history. The “Spanish” influenza and COVID -19, a hundred years apart, have impacted greatly on all aspects of society.

In a hundred years what will they be thinking then: will people look back at now and recognise the significant changes the world, as we knew it, experienced within a very short time frame.

While this is just a blip on the timeline of history, our broader history, as well as our own, is being written right now.

** Source: www.valdosta.edu/history/documents/what-is-history.pdf

Next Society Meeting

7.30pm Wednesday 8th February 2023

Eltham Senior Citizen’s Centre

Library Place, Eltham

Heritage Excursion

2.00pm Saturday 4th March 2023

Eltham South Farms

See further details on page 2

Our Next Meeting - 7.30pm Wednesday 8th February 2023

Prior to the extension of European people into the lands of the Nillum-bik in the late 1830s the Wurundjeri people had been meeting in the area now known as Eltham Lower Park for thousands of years. Waterway junctions had a particular attraction as tribal meeting places and the junction of the Diamond Creek with the Yarra River (Birrarung to the Wurundjeri) was one such important location in terms of aboriginal culture. The sculpture "Not Just a Pretty Place" by Aleks Danko, located near the junction of these two watercourses pays tribute to this important cultural location.

The first European settlers were squatters or leaseholders and itinerants such as timber workers. Records of their early occupation are sketchy but the Eltham Lower Park area was probably included within the pastoral run established in 1841 by Henry Foley. He sold his leasehold in 1845 to Joseph Wilson who in turn sold it to Frederick Faulkner soon after.

From this early history the Eltham Lower Park area has undergone many changes and has been developed to provide residents and visitors with a range of passive and active public open space, including even being used for various horse racing events.

At our next meeting, Jim Connor will explore the history of Eltham Lower Park and touch on various individuals and groups involved along the way.

As always, Society members and visitors are most welcome to attend this meeting, at 7.30pm on Wednesday 8th February 2023 in the Eltham Senior Citizens' Centre, Library Place, Eltham.



March Excursion - Saturday 4th March - Eltham South Farms

For our excursion on Saturday 4th March we intend to walk around the area that was the earlier location of the Eltham South Farms, which is now parkland and residential subdivisions. It will include views of the Diamond Creek valley from Porter Street, the parkland known as Barak Bushland and a traverse of the perimeter of the former Fabbro farm land in Bell Street.

We will discuss the former farmers such as the Falkiners, Wests, Fabbros and Bollas and note the locations of their houses.

Maurie Fabbro was the last of the family members to use their land for market garden purposes. Some people may remember him in the fields tending his rows of artichokes and other plantings.

One of Eltham's oldest houses is the former Souter farmhouse now incorporated into a modern house. Although hidden from the street we can walk past this property.

This walk is about 2.5 km in length and will take 2 to 2.5 hours. It will start at 2pm at the corner of Ely Street and Falkiner Street. (Melway ref. 21 H8).

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



Maurie Fabbro
Photograph - Valley Weekly
21st June 2006

This article by the late Tony Brocksopp was first published in the September 2013 edition of our newsletter.

The Eltham Horse and Pony Club celebrate its 60th birthday in November 2013.

The Pony Club was a dream of Diana Bassett-Smith, which came true, based on the British Horse Society Pony Club that was formed in 1929 and is a worldwide organisation.

A meeting was called at 'Lavender Park', the home of Mrs. Mary Grant and her brother George 'Mel' Balfour. Invited to the meeting were Baye Skues, Eric Rundle, Ben Taylor, the Barringtons, Smiths, Lou Lewis and Gwen Cascaden. They all supported Diana Basset-Smith for forming a Pony Club.

The first formal meeting was held at 'Landscape', which was the Barrington's home. Bernie Smith, who owned 'Nerriman Park' off Ryans Road, was the treasurer for over thirty years. They negotiated with the Lands Department for the use of the grounds in Eltham Lower Park for a peppercorn rent.

Eltham was the fourth Pony Club in Victoria, the other three being Frankston, Templestowe and Western District; together they formed the Pony Club Association of Victoria at Diana Basset-Smith's instigation. About twelve riders attended the first rally in the school holidays in early 1954. The aim was to care for their ponies, harness and have fun.

Recreational and instruction activities were carried out on a monthly basis. Members enjoyed trail rides along Mount Pleasant Road up to Laughing Water, annual hunts at Viewbank and annual camps at 'Marden' the home of Frank and Mary Mclean, near the corner of Karingal Drive and St Helena Road.

There was great community support and the club featured in show jumping at the Royal Melbourne Show. This led to 3-day events at Mornington in 1961, with components being dressage, cross-country and show jumping. The Eltham Pony Club helped run the Eltham Easter Show and ran the Lavender Park One-day event in September.

Diana Basset-Smith found it a privilege to watch the children grow and develop. Club activities taught them self-discipline, to consider others and sharing their times with friends.

The Pony Club helped those who couldn't afford ponies and gear to ride. The Pony Club Association actually outnumbered the Boy Scout Movement at one stage.

The Eltham Horse and Pony Club still exists today in the southeastern corner of Eltham Lower Park and is still turning out state competitors. Diana Basset-Smith also helped in creating Kangaroo Ground Pony Club in the mid 1960's.



This story is about someone whose work at Monash University became quite influential. But he wasn't on the academic staff, or the research staff, and neither was he a student there, so in what capacity was he working at Monash and what did he do?

Well, imagine that you're walking along a suburban street, just about anywhere in Australia. You're going past people's houses, looking at their front gardens. Sixty years ago, that's something that people did for entertainment (and possibly for inspiration before there were gardening shows on television). And back then, the typical Australian front garden would have been along traditional English lines, with manicured lawns, concrete paths, and formal rectangular beds of roses and the like.



A traditional garden layout.
Photograph - Google Street View

But nowadays, especially if you're in a newer street, many of the gardens will look rather different. They'll have a less geometric layout, with native plants, dirt or gravel paths rather than concrete, and often a few boulders strewn about. That's a fairly significant change: how did it come about?



A bush garden layout.
Photograph - Jim Connor

In the 1950s, Gordon Ford was a landscape designer living in Eltham. He sought to create for each of his clients a bespoke natural bush garden which would blend in with its environment (and Gordon regarded the house as an integral part of the garden's "environment"). Of course, there were others before him, most notably Edna Walling and Ellis Stones, but they were pretty much catering for a niche market. I remember that in about 1960, my aunt and uncle had a native bush garden in Sydney, but it was the only one in the street. The neighbours probably thought that they were eccentric, or that they were just plain lazy for not having a nice neat garden like everyone else.

But then in the mid-1960s in Melbourne, Gordon Ford (with colleague Peter Glass) was commissioned to landscape part of the campus of Monash University. Beside an artificial waterfall and lake he placed large basalt boulders and native plants in an arrangement which might have seemed a bit "modern" at the time. But it was popular: he was already getting commissions for countless industrial sites and public spaces; you can see his work at Alistair Knox Park and at Eltham Cemetery. The concept became widely imitated for private suburban gardens.

So next time you place a few old rocks in your garden to give a semi-natural look (which, to reiterate, wouldn't have been the norm sixty years ago), you might unknowingly be following in Gordon Ford's footsteps. But he mightn't approve (were he still alive). He said in an interview in 1991: "The Australian natural garden has been bastardised: volcanic rock being thrown into the sedimentary country like currants in a pie, by people without horticultural knowledge [who] don't know anything about landscape design."

Nillumbik Shire, like its predecessor, Eltham Shire is well known as a district in which live and have lived several well-known painters, sculptors, potters, writers and other creatives. Mention the name Eltham and many things spring to mind; conservation, the integration of architecture with the environment, mud-brick buildings and Montsalvat.

In 1970 in the lead up to the centenary of the Shire of Eltham, the community was asked to contribute photos and stories to a history project. Original photos were lent to the Council, copied and returned. This project, managed by local author Alan Marshall, led to the publication of *Pioneers & Painters : 100 years of Eltham and its Shire*, published in 1971.

The collection of over 500 images is held in partnership between Eltham District Historical Society and Yarra Plenty Regional Library (Eltham Library) and is now formally known as the 'The Shire of Eltham Pioneers Photograph Collection'. It is significant in being the first community sourced collection representing the places and people of the Shire's first one hundred years.

The collection was fully digitised in 2013 and is accessible on the library catalogue (advanced search) and EDHS's catalogue on Victorian Collections.

The Collection includes images from the Kinglake district when it was formed as part of the Eltham Shire from the early 1870s, Kinglake National Park, Queenstown, Christmas Hills, Panton Hill, Yarra Glen, Warrandyte, Kangaroo Ground, Research, Eltham, Montmorency, Briar Hill, Lower Plenty, Hurstbridge and Diamond Creek. It also includes photos of the Shire of Eltham early residents' reunion, the opening of the Eltham Library in 1971, the Shire of Eltham Council members at



Harvesting at Research

SEPP 0526 - Photograph from the EDHS collection *

the time of the centenary celebrations, the centenary official dinner, the launch of *Pioneers and Painters*, the centenary buffet dinner, procession of floats and a steam train excursion during the centenary celebrations. The Shire of Eltham staff members during the centenary celebrations and works of various artists are also included.

Images have been used in marketing collateral in the form of postcards and other material, displays, newsletters, presentations, HistoryPin and more.

In 2017 images from the collection were used to inspire artists to create a collection of panels known as *Our Eltham Artistic Reflections* at Eltham Cemetery. Information about the images and images of the panels are provided in a booklet, available online on their website.

Research and information about the images have continued to evolve over the years, especially since the advent of resources like Trove with its local historical digitised newspapers.

As time goes by, this significant collection becomes more valued as geographical landscapes and ways of life change. It continues to connect us to the past.

The only historic public horse trough in the Shire of Nillumbik, at 1522 Main Road, Research, was unfortunately damaged by a motor vehicle on 29th April 2022. This trough is historically and aesthetically significant and is covered by Heritage Overlay HO130 in the Nillumbik Planning Scheme. Following our request, we were pleased Nillumbik Shire Council initiated early action to ensure this damage was appropriately repaired.

It was known this trough had previously been repaired and on checking our records, we found the following article from our Newsletter No. 95, in March 1994:

“Those of you who regularly pass through Research may have noticed that the horse trough in Main Road near the corner of Warrandyte Road has been badly damaged. In trying to make a decision whether to repair it (still not decided), the Council sought information on its history. The inscription on the trough says “Donated by Annis and George Bills Australia”. It does not contain a date. Enquiries were made with local residents. Margaret Reynolds and Kevin Brinkkotter thought that the present concrete trough had been installed in the 1940s. It replaced an earlier iron trough, which was there from the 1910s and probably earlier. They did not know the origins of the trough and its inscription so Andrew Lemon, the local historian who wrote “Return to Research”, agreed to make some enquiries.

Andrew obtained information from the R.S.P.C.A. which shows that the trough was one of many donated by the Bills throughout Victoria and possibly in other areas. George Bills (1859-1927) was a successful manufacturer of mattresses and other woven wire products.

He had a great love of animals since childhood and this was shared by his wife Annis whom he married in 1885. They donated funds to many animal welfare causes probably world-wide. George’s will bequeathed seventy thousand pounds to the R.S.P.C.A., a huge sum for the times. A family trust also provided for the erection of the horse troughs. It is not clear whether the Research trough was provided directly from the estate or was shifted from another location to replace the ageing iron trough.”

Later, additional information was sourced by Harry Gilham: “They (the Bills) were particularly concerned with the wellbeing of the all too often ill-treated and neglected horses, which were the mainstay of commercial transportation, in particular their inadequate watering facilities. These concrete troughs were built with the simple geometric shapes of the Art Deco period and were not just for horses, as a few were also erected in Central Australia for camels. They also had a little section at one end for dogs and a fountain above for people to drink from. The erection of the troughs in England and many other countries was handled by an organisation called “The Metropolitan Drinking-Fountain and Cattle Trough Association” which had been formed in 1859 to provide for the refreshment of animals and their drivers.”

This trough is a significant part of the local history of Research and a reminder of the reliance upon horse powered transport right up until the middle of the 20th century.



Before and After 2022 Photographs - Jim Connor

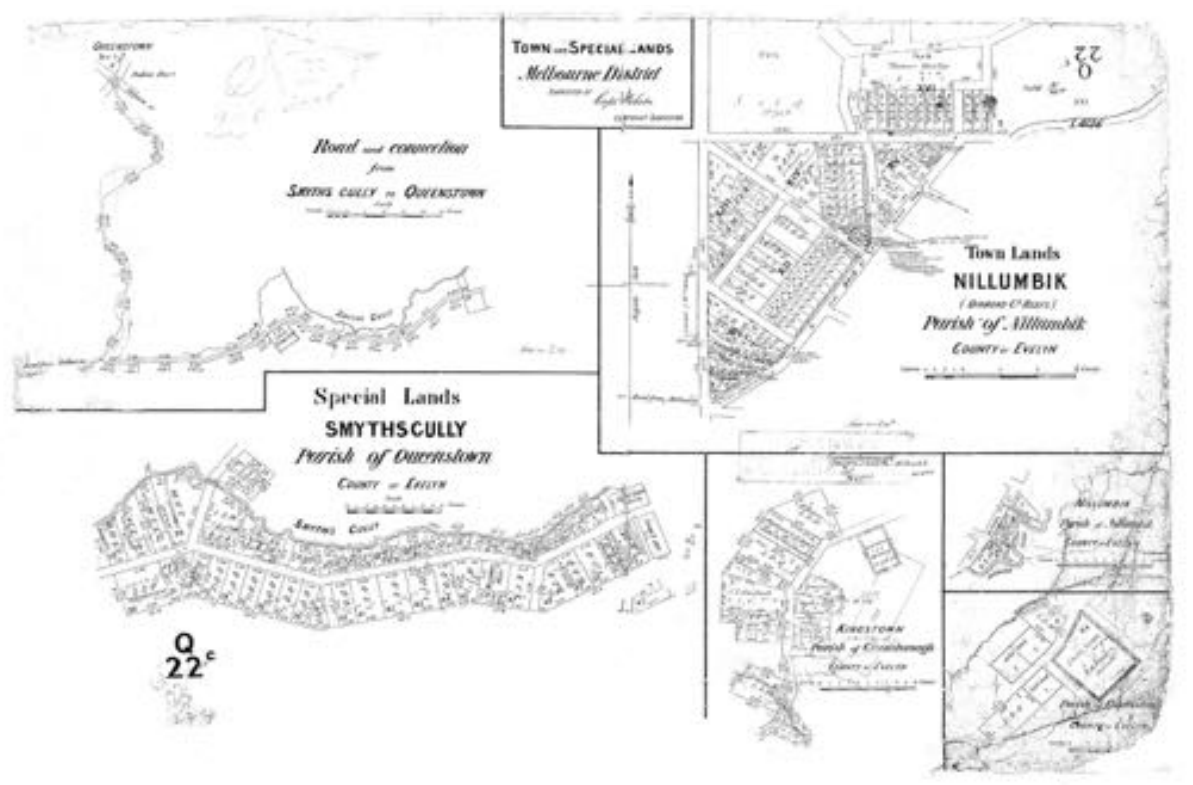
A Story From Our Records

In research notes prepared by Keith Chappel is this Eltham story from *The Argus*, Saturday 26th July 1856

ELTHAM DISTRICT (From a correspondent ... July 24th 1856)

The inhabitants of this locality are exceedingly gratified by the steps Government are at length taking towards giving them some kind of road worthy (of) the name, even though the operations have not as yet progressed beyond the surveys of the line of road; and, considering that it is now seventeen years since this district was first opened up by the farmers of the Kangaroo Ground, and not a single bit of road has as yet been made by the Government, it surely is not too soon to make surveys.

Indeed this part of the country - only a dozen or fifteen miles from Melbourne as to distance, but more than double that distance practically, owing to bad roads, etc. has hitherto been most strangely neglected; and notwithstanding the most strenuous exertions on the part of both the Kangaroo Ground and Eltham farmers, nothing has yet been done by Government to help them out of their troubles. It is to be hoped, therefore, that now a beginning has been made, in the way of surveys, we shall really have something done before long. A more beautiful district does not exist in the colony, and once fairly started, none will outvie it in prosperity.



Early survey maps of Nillumbik townships prepared by Cape Webster - surveyor
Copy in EDHS collection provided by Neil Webster - surveyor

More loss and hardship have perhaps fallen on the farmers of this district than on any others, owing to the immense labor required in clearing, grubbing, etc., over most districts: for this part of the country, though so extremely fertile and luxuriant when in full cultivation, presents a very unlikely appearance to the intending farmer: but when to this is added the absence of any road, save stump-strewed bullock-tracks, it is quite enough to dishearten any man, and helps to prevent that speeding of the plough which most assuredly for many years will prove the greatest source of prosperity to the colony. There is little doubt but that your efforts lately on behalf of the agricultural interest have done much to awaken the Government to the necessity of unusual exertions in assisting that class of the community, and this neighborhood feels very grateful to you.

But it is not only the agriculturists who desire roads, bridges, etc. in this neighborhood. We have no less than three or four sets of diggings lying near Eltham, to find out which the poor diggers are sometimes sorely puzzled, and which, from their proximity to Melbourne, would prove useful to the diggers of little capital, as not involving great travelling expenses.

There are the Old Caledonia diggings, which are at present paying very fair wages; then there is the New Caledonia, which have not turned out permanently remunerative, probably owing to insufficient search; then we come to the lately discovered diggings at Bell's paddock. I visited these diggings a day or two since, and from replies to my questions to the diggers learned that they can depend upon half a pennyweight to three buckets of washing stuff. The holes are sunk in the bed of the creek to the depth of from eight to twelve feet.

Many of the holes are driven some distance, after going down about six or eight feet. The sand is of a golden colour, but does not show any signs of gold to the naked eye. The largest nugget taken out as yet weighed 13 dwts (pennyweights). There were about twenty diggers at work, but the number was increasing. The diggers have requested Mr. Bell to allow them to enter his paddock through which the creek runs higher up; but that gentleman has hitherto declined to accede to their request.

The diggers seem confident that they would do well should Mr. Bell kindly permit even a small portion of the creek in his paddock to be worked. This creek is called the Dry Creek; just now, however, there is rather too much water. These diggings are but three miles from Eltham, by the short cut, which runs across the ranges by the farm of James Buchanan, Esq. at the eastside of the township.

Lastly, there is Anderson's Creek, the oldest goldfield in Victoria. Between Bell's diggings and Anderson's Creek is but three miles by the short cut across the ranges, but, from the fact of there being no bridge across the Yarra hereabouts, the traveller has to go round by way of Templestowe - a distance of about fifteen miles.

At Anderson's Creek some are doing very well, and the only hindrance to the well-doing of all seems to be the absence of machinery. It certainly does seem strange that some few capitalists do not turn their attention to the development of the treasures hereabouts.

From Anderson's Creek the transition is easy to Mr Anderson, one of the candidates offering himself for this district. I regretted that when he addressed himself to the Eltham electors yesterday (Wednesday, 23) he was not explicit as to the question of roads for his district. He merely said that the roads must speak for themselves, which they certainly do as far as those who travel on them are concerned; but, alas! none of the members of the Government are in the habit of travelling on them.

The land is now pretty generally ready for the seed, but the late wet weather has hitherto prevented the farmers from sowing. A great quantity of new land is being turned up in this neighborhood, so it is evident there are plenty who have faith in the agricultural interest. It would be much to be regretted if the Protection heresy were to take root in the minds of the farmers in this locality, as one might be led to fear by the fact that the most influential farmer of the Kangaroo Ground asked Mr. Anderson, when at Eltham, if he would be prepared to support a prohibitive duty on imported corn.

It is due to Mr Anderson to say that he at once stated that if his success in that district depended on the support of such a duty he would at once retire from the field. Mr Anderson's views seem likely to win him success.

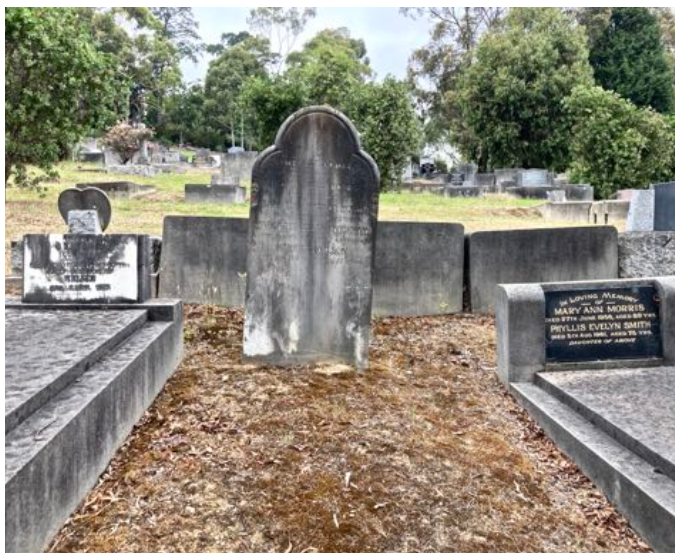
Harriet Wilson, nee Morris - 1842 - 1874 - Eltham Pioneer

On 29th January 1842, John Morris, aged 24 (a bonded convict from England transported for 15 years aboard the *Earl Grey*) married Jane Elliott, aged 19 (a free person) from Scotland, at St James Church, Melbourne.

Three days later, a daughter, Harriet was born. Some researchers have said that she is believed to be the first white child to be born in Eltham. We know that fellow Eltham pioneers Thomas and Margaret Sweeney had twin daughters born in 1841 at "Yarra Yarra". Harriet was the first of eleven children. The family lived at what was the corner of Susan Street and Dalton Street (now Withers Way).

Eighteen years later, on 28th February 1859, Harriet married twenty-six-year-old American, Hill Wilson. By this time the gold rush had expanded, and Hill was chasing gold at the Caledonia gold diggings.

Harriet delivered three children with Hill, Margaret (b.1859), Emmeline (b. Eltham, 1861) and George (b. Research, 1867) before he left his family to chase gold in New Zealand. Harriet gave birth to a fourth child, a son, Johnston in 1872 after Hill had left.



Morris Family graves, which includes Harriet Wilson - Eltham Cemetery - January 2023 - Photographs Jim Connor

Harriet died on February 12th, 1874. She was 33 years old, her youngest child aged two. Hill never returned to Harriet or his family. He died at sea on returning to the United States in 1884.

Harriet is buried with two brothers and two sisters (who all died after her, all too soon, aged in their twenties between 1884 and 1885) in a family grave, and near her parents who pre-deceased her.

The Morris children gravestone has blackened over time but can easily be found facing Mount Pleasant Road in the Church of England section of the cemetery. Harriet is surrounded by her family, who we trust also supported her in her life - spent in the Eltham and Research Gully district.

Eltham Villa Brings £2,500

"Sunnybrook", the home of the late Mr. Strong, situate in Bolton Street, Eltham, was sold by auction in the city on Wednesday for £2,500. It is a seven-roomed weatherboard and roughcast villa, surrounded by more than four acres of land. Extensive alterations and renovations have recently been made to it.

Source: The Advertiser Friday July 8th 1932 - <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/56738304/5874301>

We appreciate the support our Society receives from our local sponsors and encourage you to support them



shillinglaw.com.au



Eltham | Greensborough | Doreen
Gayle Blackwood 0408 776 070

Eltham and District
Community Bank® Branch



LAND SURVEYORS ✓
TOWN PLANNING ✓
PROJECT MANAGEMENT ✓

webstergroup.com.au (03) 9439 4222

Proudly supported by



Nillumbik
The Green Wedge Shire



MICHAEL WILSON
DIAMOND JEWELLERS
www.michaelwilson.com.au

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

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

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 are always interested to consider local history stories or articles for publication in our newsletter