

David Newbury (Artist)

Born in Eltham in 1925, David Alan Newbury is the son of artist Albert E. (Peter) Newbury (1891-1941). He studied at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology where he later became a part-time teaching instructor from 1955 to 1959. He then taught at Bendigo Teachers College 1959-1961 and Melbourne Teachers' College between 1962 and 1983.

David Newbury was married to Clare Margaret Newbury. According to the 1954 Electoral Roll they were living at 36A Murphy Street, South Yarra however around 1953 they purchased Lots 3 and 4 of Main Road Lot Plan LP 23911 in Lower Plenty. A building permit, No. 71, was issued 8 December 1953 for a 5-room house of Vertical Board construction, cost £2,840, builder L. Williams, owner D. Newbury of 36 Murphy Cl., South Yarra. The large house was in fact mostly built of mudbrick, the construction method was only just becoming recognised as an acceptable form in the late 1940s for issuance of a building permit. The house was commenced in 1954, designed by David Newbury and built by David Newbury, Horrie Judd and others.

Information from Newbury family friends suggests that a second mudbrick building was constructed in the late 1950s, early 1960s for use as an artist studio by Newbury. The building was connected directly to the water mains at the time and was made suitable for living accommodation during the period Newbury was teaching at Bendigo. Apparently he and Claire rented out the main house during their time in Bendigo and would reside in the studio when visiting Melbourne. No permit for this studio was found in the Building Permit Register, Shire of Eltham, 1949-1960. The last recorded entries in the register are dated May 1960. This would suggest that the studio was constructed post May 1960. It is believed the studio was constructed during the latter period of Newbury's teaching post in Bendigo so possibly late 1960/1961.

In 1963 the Newburys address in the Electoral Roll has the property recorded as 220 Main Road, Lower Plenty. Between 1967 to 1980 the Electoral Rolls record the property as 338 Main Road. Today the address is 37 Rangeview Road, Lower Plenty.

REFERENCES:

David Newbury. 1925-2003 Australia. (2025, March 15). Retrieved from <https://www.aasd.com.au/artist/7570-david-newbury/>

Ancestry.com. *Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903-1980* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. (Original data: Australian Electoral Commission. *[Electoral roll]*.)

EDHS_04326-14 – Photo: David and Claire Newbury House and Artists Studio (1954) - noted on back - Commenced 1954 Designed by David Newbury; Built by David Newbury, Horrie Judd and others

Taylor, David (2025) – local knowledge recollections from Newbury family friends

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Marshall, Alan (1971). *Pioneers & Painters : one hundred years of Eltham and its Shire.*] : [T.] Nelson [(Australia), [Melbourne] pp123, 126

Victorian Collections, Federation University Art Collection

<https://victoriancollections.net.au/items/534748159821f420f8c03659>

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Marshall, Alan (1971). *Pioneers & Painters : one hundred years of Eltham and its Shire.*] : [T.] Nelson [(Australia), [Melbourne] Page 116

“A. E. (Peter) Newbury was another young artist who decided to make Eltham his home. Newbury was born in 1891 and, as a young student, he was influenced by Frederick McCubbin and Walter Withers; later he was to become one of the first painters influenced by the work of Max Meldrum. It was through his association with the Withers family that Peter Newbury first became acquainted with the Eltham district in the early years of World War I. He was a dedicated artist who became instructor in painting at Swinburne Technical College and, later, drawing master at the National Gallery School. In 1921 he married and purchased land in Cromwell Street, Eltham and on it built a house within sight of the Withers's home.”

“The Eltham district was his first love and inspired many of his best paintings. He was always known as a great conversationalist and wit and one of his friends remarked that if his hands were cutoff he would not be able to talk. He and Richard McCann were great friends and before their marriages the two would often spend weekends sketching and painting. Sometimes they would stay the night at the Eltham Hotel. Richard McCann recalled a night when the two of them, the only guests, had an upstairs room in the old timber building. The floorboards were full of holes and the two young painters couldn't get to sleep because mice kept popping up through the floor. The ever resourceful Peter Newbury got out of bed and left the room. He soon returned with all the chamber pots that he had collected from the other, vacant, rooms, and proceeded to place one over each hole. There were no more mice entering the room, but the rest of the night was disturbed by the 'music' of the mice banging their noses against the pots - 'Ping, Ping'.”

“His son, artist David Newbury, who lives in Eltham, recalls another story of his father's about a pony which belonged to Walter Withers's son, Bill. Bill was very fond of this white pony. Unfortunately, the pony died and Mrs Withers took Bill to Melbourne by train, leaving Peter Newbury and Walter Dobson (a local farmer and general handyman) to make the necessary burial arrangements. The day was hot and Eltham residents knew the quality of the Eltham soil. Peter Newbury had a brilliant idea: why dig a normal rectangular hole larger than the animal? Had he not years of training in draughtsmanship? The contours of the animal were brilliantly inscribed on the ground. Considerable labour was saved. After some hours all was ready for interment. Unfortunately, all did not go as planned. The animal slipped too neatly into the hole and neither rocks nor perspiration would keep those legs in position. All too soon Bill and his mother arrived home to be greeted by the sight of one sad leg thrust skywards in the south

Peter Pidgeon, Eltham District Historical Society

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paddock. Unfortunately, Newbury's health was not robust and he died in the house he had built in Cromwell Street, early in World War II."

Marshall, Alan (1971). *Pioneers & Painters : one hundred years of Eltham and its Shire.*] : [T.] Nelson [(Australia), [Melbourne] Page 123, 126

"David Newbury is certainly the artist who has lived the longest in Eltham as he was born there in 1925. David makes an interesting comment on Eltham when he says that in spite of a childhood spent in the district he knew that he wanted to spend his adult life there. Particularly as a painter, he continues to be absorbed with local landscape. He now lives in a large house, much of which is mudbrick, with a magnificent mudbrick studio, only about 1 mile south of his birthplace."