

Artist with a claim to fame

Percy Leason and Walter Withers are names charged with emotion to most Diamond Valley residents who are proud of the district's artistic heritage.

But they are only names.

Certainly we know the little timber cottage in Bolton Street that was once Walter Withers' home — a home where Hans Heysen is said to have taken some lessons from Withers.

And we are familiar with the lovely two storey home Leason built in Lavendar Park Road, with him impressive ballroom style

studio in the back garden.

But these forerunners of the present community of artists for which Eltham has become known, were living in Eltham when artist, David Newbury, was born.

Born when his parents lived in Cromwell Street, when all around were small farms, David attended Eltham Primary School when Percy Leason's daughter was there.

And he remembers sleeping in the Withers'

home as a small boy when his parents were visiting here.

But David Newbury needs no connections with Leason or Withers to claim any fame — in fact, he probably has a more powerful claim of his own.

Himself the only child of an artist, he went on to become a prominent name in the art world and is named in the book, Pioneers and Painters, as being the only resident painter in Eltham to have lived here all his life, now a total of 57 years, 28 years in his present home.

His father's paintings hang on the walls of his home alongside his own and those of other well known artists.

David's father, Peter Newbury was, as a young student, influenced by Frederick McCubbin and Walter Withers.

Later he was to become one of the first artists to be influenced by Max Meldrum.

He was instructor in painting at Swinburne Technical School for a time and then drawing master at the National Gallery School.

History has repeated itself to a degree, in that David Newbury has been teaching art at the Melbourne State College for 21 years.

He is now at the point of retiring.

"When I was a kid, Eltham was a town of hill-billies," he said.

"It was just about the only place where people could scratch out a living."

He recalled that haircuts were 3d (about three cents). They later went up to 6d (five cents).

"A chemist used to open up each Wednesday afternoon," David said.

"And plum orchards covered all that hill (behind the high school).

"My first job was selling insurance.

"Then I went into the air

School

"After the war, I trained at Melbourne Teachers' College under the CAT scheme and became an art and craft teacher."

He met his wife, Clare, when they were both teaching at Orbost.

Later, David went to art school at the RMIT and set his life's course in that direction.

"You can't actually teach art, though.

"You can teach such things as techniques and method, but a student has either got it or he hasn't got it."

"However, it's more than just talent.

"You have to have drive.

"Certainly, artists must be influenced, but you can't just build art on art."

"Some artists paint because it flatters their ego, some to earn money, and some because they love painting."

"But you can't expect every painting to be a masterpiece.

"You have to produce paintings that you will be prepared to destroy.

"There are certain things about paintings that are timeless, such as colour, tone, and how to look after brushes."

Timeless

David's work has all the timeless qualities of the great artists.

He is, nevertheless, an artist for the 80s.

His paintings hang alongside his father's.

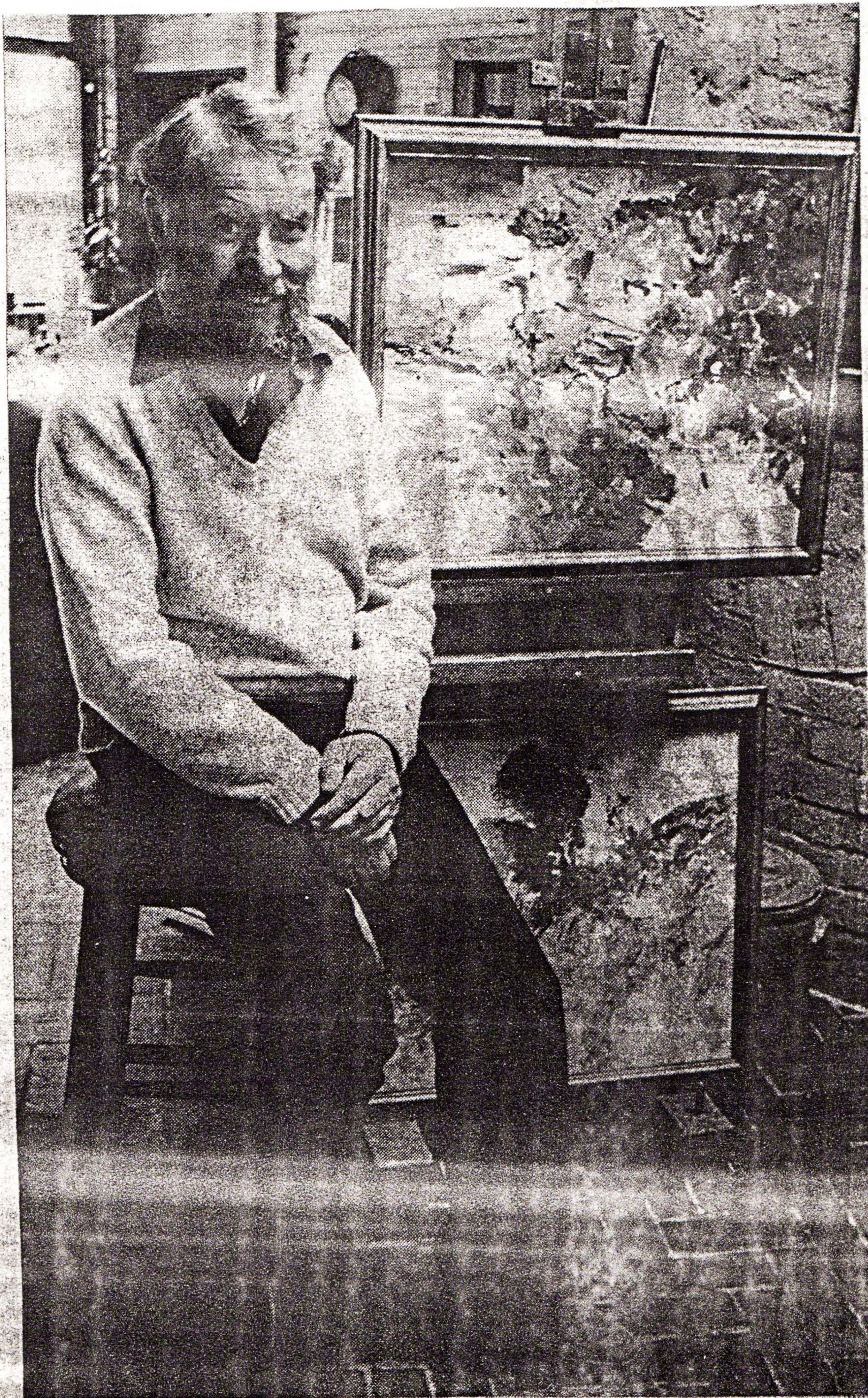
Their landscapes are often of similar areas, such

as Mogg's Creek down past Torquay and scenes in and around Eltham.

But they are seen through the eyes of father and son, two different men with a common gift yet expressed in different ways.

David will be one of a group of artists who will take the summer school at Melbourne State College from January 5-14, 1983.

David's subject will be landscaped painting.



● *David Newbury*