



No. 275 April 2024

The Value of History

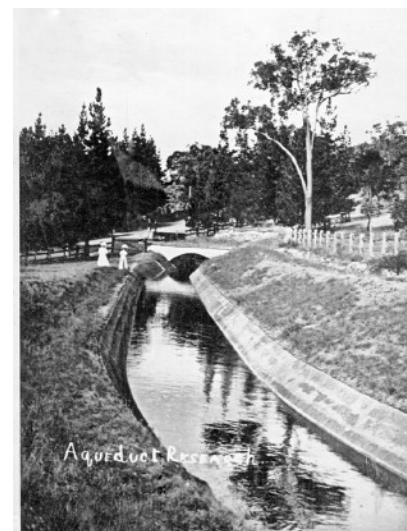
Jim Connor

There are over 350 historical societies throughout Victoria; all not for profit groups operated by committed, passionate volunteers working to honour and preserve the history of their communities. These volunteers, who invest thousands of hours every year working on behalf of their local communities, receive little financial support.

The Local History Grants Program through the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) is important to assist these groups, including with undertaking the preservation, digitisation and cataloguing of valuable records, held on behalf of their communities.

In the past, such a grant enabled our society to undertake the digitisation of what is known as the Shire of Eltham Pioneers Photograph Collection (SEPP), shared in a partnership between the Eltham District Historical Society and the Yarra Plenty Regional Library (Eltham Library).

The digitisation of this significant collection of historic photographs has extended the accessibility of this valuable community resource, which otherwise would not be available for widespread use, by anyone interested in the local history of the Eltham district. The Local History Grant that enabled this work to be undertaken has been a valued investment, with long term returns, in preserving and retaining important reminders of community memories. Without this funding grant this project would not have happened. These photographs are regularly used in presentations, media, web pages and in this newsletter, to encourage recognition of our history.



Aqueduct at Research

* Photograph - SEPP collection

There are heightened concerns within the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and member historical societies about the intended removal, by the State Government, of funding for the Local History Grants Program, as well as the Victorian Community History Awards. Many societies have contacted the Minister for Government Services, the Honourable Gabrielle Williams, and their local State MP, advocating for the restoration of quadrennial funding for these two programs to PROV.

This funding amounts to less than half a million dollars per year and yet can improve the outcomes for over 350 historical societies, many authors and other creatives, designers, publishers and book lovers. It is hoped the State Government realises the extent of support these two modest programs provide, for so many people across Victoria, and agrees to continue this valued funding. After all, historical societies are the memory keepers for their communities.

Annual General Meeting

2.00pm Saturday 13th April 2024

Eltham Senior Citizen's Centre

Library Place, Eltham

Heritage Excursion

2.00pm Saturday 4th May 2024

Stokes Orchard and beyond.

See further details on page 2

Next Meeting - Annual General Meeting - 2.00pm Saturday 13th April 2024

Our next meeting at 2.00pm on Saturday 13th April 2024 will be our **Annual General Meeting**, which includes the presentation of annual reports, as well as the election of office bearers for the coming year.

The official notification of the Annual General Meeting and Agenda are on page 9 in this newsletter. It will be held at our usual meeting venue, the **Eltham Senior Citizens' Centre in Library Place Eltham**. This is on a Saturday afternoon and members and guests are welcome to attend.

The Shire of Eltham was established in 1871 and ceased to exist, due to a municipal restructure, when all councillors were sacked on 15 December 1994, which is 30 years ago this December.

At this meeting, Jim Connor will provide a presentation about *From Eltham to Nillumbik Shires - a personal perspective*. Jim has been active in the local community for over 40 years and was the last councillor elected to the Shire of Eltham. Following the restructure he became a member of the Nillumbik Shire Council Planning Special Committee, which included three commissioners and three community members, and was also chair of the Nillumbik Disability Advisory Committee. In both roles he obtained insights into the early operation of the new council. Jim has also been a member of the Eltham District Historical Society since 1990 and president from 2009.

We look forward to seeing you at this meeting, at **2.00pm on Saturday 13th April 2024**.

May Excursion - Saturday 4th May - Stokes Orchard and beyond

Crown Allotment 15 Section 5 Parish of Nillumbik (CA 15) is a parcel of land of a quarter of a square mile extending from Eucalyptus Road to Reynolds Road at the eastern extremity of Eltham. From the 1940s it was known as Stokes orchard. In later years it has been subdivided for residential purposes but leaving significant areas as power line and water supply reserves and bushland reserves that are habitat for the threatened Eltham Copper Butterfly.

For our excursion on 4th May we intend to walk through CA 15 to a bushland reserve east of Reynolds Road. The walk will traverse the boundary between suburban Eltham and the non-urban areas to the south and east.

This is a pleasant walk through residential areas and bushland. Along the way we will discuss the early and more recent history of CA 15 as well as local natural history and geology.

This walk is about 3.5 km in length and will take 2 to 2.5 hours. It will start at 2pm at the corner of Eucalyptus Road, Pitt Street and Nyora Road. Street parking is available but exercise care in parking due to narrow roads, hill crests and the like.

The walk will be along streets and bush tracks. It will include some rough ground so sturdy footwear should be worn. This free walk is open to the general public as well as Society members.

Dogs are not permitted on Society excursions. Phone number for contact on the day - 0409 021 063.



Being an inveterate card collector and an old Eltham resident I have naturally been drawn to the early postcards of Eltham. The first card pictured was offered to me recently only because of the inscription on the back: *"Taken at Eltham, Victoria, March 1924 E. S. Lloyd"*

Just one hundred years ago this photograph would appear to show a family group out on a motor trip perhaps from an inner Melbourne suburb or possibly from further afield. They are all very tidily dressed as if having earlier been to church. We are unlikely to be able to identify anyone in the group. Probably E S Lloyd is one or other of the two gentlemen pictured.



"Taken at Eltham, Victoria, March 1924 E. S. Lloyd"

Postcard - Michael Aitken

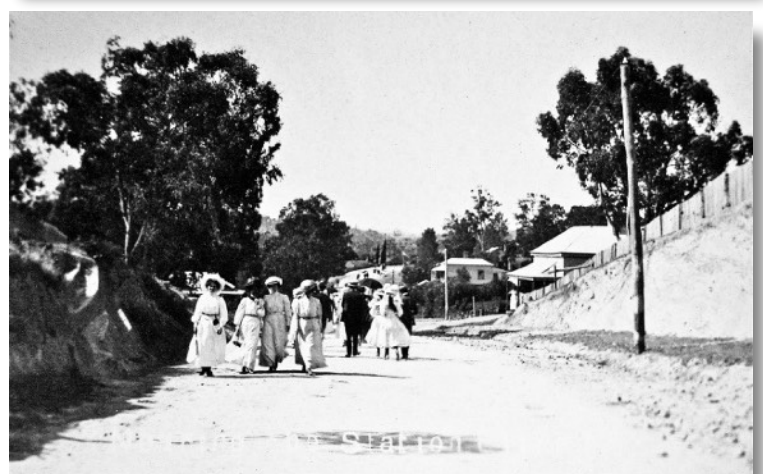
I like to think that this family came from a salubrious suburb. Rosemary and I first visited Eltham from Parkville in 1965 when Fitzsimons Lane Bridge had just been built enabling an easy visit to Montsalvat. When my lovely Toorak cousin heard that we were intending to settle in Eltham by the next year, she amused me by remarking "Oh, we once went for a picnic out there". Some of our other friends worried that we could fall off the edge of the planet if we ventured any further.

The other two postcards better illustrate Eltham for the visitor in our early days.

The first is a wonderful image. *"A peep at the picnickers, Eltham"*. This is actually a view of Main Road looking north from the corner of Dudley Street, before the shops on the east side were built. There are no motor vehicles. The Eltham station was nearby to the left beyond the single shop.



The second image was probably taken by the same photographer on the same day. *"Nearing the Station"* shows a view of Main Road looking north from about the intersection of Bridge Street.



Overdressed holiday groups are strolling to and from the Eltham station. These latter two views would appear to date just pre-WW1 in the gentle Edwardian period.

Eltham had been established as a district centre quite early in Melbourne's history. Artists, walkers and nature lovers were attracted to the locality.

Some of us started here as tourists and ended up as long-time residents.

* Photographs - EDHS SEPP collection

You can just picture it, the main road bridge over the Diamond Creek at Eltham has just collapsed following a substantial flood event which occurred on October 13th -14th 1923.

Reporters swoop in by horse and/or motor vehicle, seeking out the old timers, for they are the ones who hold all knowledge and wisdom, whose wrinkles just reek of historical insight from a life of experience well lived. "When was the bridge built?" they ask. "Ooh, it would have had to have been a good 80 years ago now" they proffer. And so, we document, the original bridge was erected about 1840.

But that is not really the case, is it? One thing we learn as we document our history, as time progresses and more resources become available revealing new evidence, we can fine tune the record and hone the story better.

Those old timers that suggested the bridge was about 80 years old when it collapsed were not completely without fact. We accept that there must have been some form of bridge present as it was marked on the Surveyor General's 1856 map of the Village of Eltham.

However, that was not the 'original' wooden trestle bridge that collapsed in 1923. That bridge was only 66 years old. Tenders for its erection were invited in April 1857 by the Eltham District Road Board, the first form of local government for the district established in 1857.

The bridge was built for the coach road when Cobb & Co.'s coach was the only conveyance between Eltham and Melbourne.

Flooding was a common occurrence. 1918 was a significant flood year.

A postcard of the bridge taken c.1918 shows surrounding orchards submerged in floodwaters.

When the 66-year-old timber bridge collapsed in 1923, during flooding of the Diamond Creek, there was widespread damage in Melbourne and surrounding areas by floods resulting from the overflow of the Yarra at many points along its banks. A temporary bridge was rigged up but severely damaged months later by further flooding of the creek and was closed to vehicular traffic in April 1924.

In September 1924 tenders were invited for the construction of a new reinforced concrete structure bridge over the Diamond Creek. In all, five were received and the tender of Reinforced Concrete and Monier Pipe Construction Company, Collins House, Melbourne for £7,970 was recommended in November to the Country Roads Board for acceptance.



The collapsed Main Road Bridge, circa October 1923. Photo: Charlotte Cone (poss.) courtesy Heather Jenkins (nee Cone)

Photograph - EDHS collection



Advertising (1857, April 17) The Argus (Melbourne, Vic)

Image - EDHS collection

Demolition of the old wooden bridge structure and construction of the new concrete bridge commenced a year later in November 1925 and by December the remains of the old bridge had been completely removed and excavation work commenced.

By May 1926 all the concrete piles and abutments had been completed. The bridge was finally completed and opened for traffic in September 1926, almost three years after it initially collapsed.



Construction of the new concrete bridge c. May 1926
Photograph - *EDHS SEPP collection

In 1984 the bridge was widened with a completely new decking undertaken by the Road Construction Authority, along with reconstruction of Main Road to Mount Pleasant Road. The revised bridge was opened October 26th 1984.

For more images of the bridge over time, refer to the story on our website - [Significant Trees, Main Road Bridge, Eltham](https://elthamhistory.wordpress.com/2021/09/14/significant-trees-main-road-bridge-eltham/)
<<https://elthamhistory.wordpress.com/2021/09/14/significant-trees-main-road-bridge-eltham/>>

Where is Platy?

Jim Connor

This story was published by the Eltham Library in 2014 as part of the celebrations of the 20th Anniversary of their opening in May 1994....it will be the 30th anniversary on 22nd May 2024.

Eltham Library will be celebrating this 30th anniversary with displays and activities on Saturday 22nd June 2024. Visit: www.yprl.vic.gov.au

Where is Platy?....usually when one of the young grandchildren has a question I have at least some kind of an answer. This time I didn't; I had no idea where Platy had gone. Whenever they visited the Eltham Library they would say hello to Platy, often accompanied by a little touch or pat on the head. From appearances it seemed they were not the only ones to do this.

On enquiring with library staff we discovered that Platy had gone for a little holiday while the library was being remodeled and the popular children's section expanded. It was the first time Platy had left the building since the library was opened.

This little holiday proved much longer than anyone expected. Unfortunately Platy was lost for some time, until finally located and returned to the children's section for many young visitors, as well as a few older ones, to enjoy and give a welcome pat.

Platy is of course the wonderfully tactile platypus sculpture sensitively carved from the root of a Bunya Pine, by the highly awarded collected wood artist Peter Carrigy, who travelled from his home in South Australia to attend the library opening on Sunday 22nd May 1994.



'Platy' by Peter Carrigy
Photograph - Jim Connor

This sculpture of Platy was a gift from the councillors of the then Shire of Eltham in 1994 to the children's section of the new library, with the intention that it be placed where it could be touched, explored and experienced by children of current and future generations.

(As 2024 marks the 90th anniversary year of the establishment of Montsalvat, our EDHS newsletter during this year will feature a series of articles by Richard Pinn about significant people who lived and worked at Montsalvat.)

Helen Skipper (1914-2000)

Helen Skipper grew up at Eaglemont and went to Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar School. While a teenager, she attended Justus Jørgensen's painting classes. She became his close companion, a relationship which continued until his death. They had two children, Sebastian and Sigmund.

Helen had moved to Montsalvat in 1934, helping in the construction of the early buildings, making mudbricks, pisé de terre and rendering. She embarked on several business ventures, running a lending library and then a pet shop and a plant shop in Eltham with her father, and also ran a small vegetable delivery round. Her real passion was animals. During the Second World War, she set up the dairy at Montsalvat and bred ponies which won prizes at the Royal Melbourne Show. And importantly, Helen was integral to running Montsalvat when it first opened to the public. She maintained the buildings and grounds and was the front face to visitors.

She continued to paint when she could, and also produced tapestries depicting Montsalvat's buildings. But for various reasons, her paintings (mostly small scale works) were not exhibited during her lifetime and until very recently remained tucked away at Montsalvat.

Source: article by Fiona McIntosh and Lyndel Wischer on Montsalvat website



Helen Skipper
portrait by Justus Jørgensen

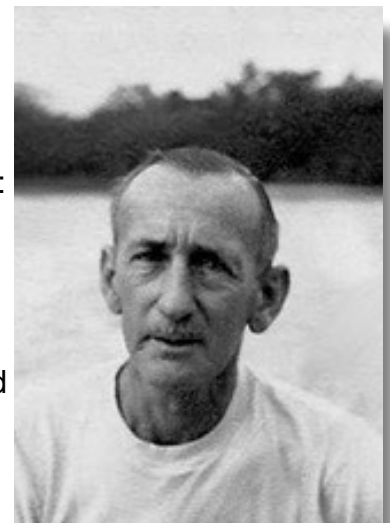
John Busst (1909-1971)

John Busst (pronounced "boost") was one of the founders of Montsalvat, taking a particular interest in building using natural local materials.

In 1940 he leased (and later bought) much of Bedarra Island off the Queensland coast, where he used his Montsalvat skills to construct a mudbrick house. He shifted to Bingil Bay near Innisfail in 1957 and bought a block with views over the Coral Sea and Great Barrier Reef and backed onto tropical rainforest. But developers were moving in too: the rainforest was being felled for sugar and banana cultivation, with pesticides and phosphates being flushed out to sea and onto the reef.

In 1967, when John learnt of a cane grower's intention to harvest dead coral as a cheap source of agricultural lime, he lodged an objection and gathered evidence to prove that the coral was in fact alive. The legal battle brought in several influential environmental groups and in due course the Queensland Mines Minister rejected the mining application, setting an important precedent. Also in 1967, John became aware that the Queensland Government had leased over 80,000 square miles of the Great Barrier Reef to oil-drilling companies. John led a campaign that eventually led to the Commonwealth taking over management of the Great Barrier Reef in 1975. John Busst deserves to be better known.

Main source: Wikipedia (quoting Queensland Heritage Register)



John Busst
Photograph - Mission Beach
Historical Society

Queenstown was a booming rustic township due to the “*Mountain Gold Rush*” on the Caledonia diggings. A second son was born to migrants Robert Joseph Harris and Elizabeth (*nee Hibbert*) in Queenstown in 1871, christened William **Wallis** Shelley, who later became the middle of three sons. In 1886 Shelley’s older brother, Robert, married Sophie Greenaway at Kangaroo Ground, who gave birth to Shelley’s first nephew, Robert Jubilee Harris in 1887. A second son and two daughters followed before Sophie’s father went to South Africa with the Second “Boer War”.

In 1899, aged 38, working as a labourer, Shelley also volunteered for South Africa. He enlisted as Private, 546, S. Harris in the Victorian (Citizen) Bushmen and went with the 3rd Contingent sent by the Colony of Victoria. He departed on 10th March 1900, returned on 6th June 1901 and discharged two days later, having served for one year and 123 days. His older brother, Robert, working at the “*Evelyn Observer*”, published several of Shelley’s letters from the South African front.

Shelley had a “Welcome Home” in July 1901. Having returned to Kinglake, he grew restless and yearned for the action on the Veldt. He tried to re-enlist into the 6th Australian Commonwealth Horse Regiment, raised in Victoria that went in May 1902, but was rejected being found medically unfit for service. Then in April 1904, Sophie had her last child, who they christened William **Wallace** Shelley Harris.

With the outbreak of WW1, Robert (Jnr) enlisted as 2073, Private, R.J Harris into the 24th Infantry Battalion on 10th July 1915, aged 28, living at Hurstbridge and working as a printer for the “*Evelyn Observer*”. On the same day his younger brother, Charles, enlisted as 1723, Pte, C.T. Harris joining the 29th Infantry Battalion, aged 25. Their father was now 54 and too old to enlist, but Shelley was 44, still single and working as a carpenter, so he enlisted two days later to look after his nephews and to again seek adventure overseas. Shelley’s Boer War experience ensured his enlistment. The three embarked on separate ships with their respective units, sailing within weeks of each other. Robert (Snr) was now the editor of the “*Evelyn Observer*”.

Private, 5025, Shelley Harris left Melbourne on RMS “*Osterley*” on 29th September 1915 with the 6th Infantry Battalion, but at Tel-el-Kabir in Egypt, he was reassigned to the 58th Infantry Battalion and sailed to the Western Front, disembarking at Marseilles on 23rd June 1916.

After two months he was promoted to Corporal and reassigned to logistical duties. Shelley was admitted to hospital at Rouen, France, nine months later, then medically evacuated to England, diagnosed with debility and classified “*unfit for further active service*”.

On 21st December 1917 Shelley returned to Melbourne aboard SS “*Borda*”. On Christmas Day 1917, he was medically discharged due to debility and age. Shelley was 46 years old.



left to right: Charles T. Harris, Shelley Harris and Robert J. Harris
pre-embarkation photo (c1915)

Whereas Robert (Jnr) had embarked on the SS "**Anchives**" (A68) on 26th August 1915, Charles sailed on HMAT "**Demosthenes**" (A64) on 29th October 1915. Robert joined his unit at Gallipoli after two months, where he remained until the evacuation from ANZAC Cove, disembarking at Alexandria on 27th December 1915. At Tel el Kahir he was admitted to hospital with influenza and then held at a transit depot in Egypt. Meanwhile, Charles was reassigned to the 14th Infantry Battalion in Egypt and after training, sailed for France, disembarking at Marseilles on 8th June 1916. Three weeks later, Robert's unit arrived at Marseilles. All three, were now serving on the Western Front. Robert was reported "*Missing in Action*" on 19th July 1916. Charles was wounded by a shell fragment to the left knee three weeks later and admitted to hospital, after which Robert was deemed "*Killed in Action*" at Fleurbaix, France.

Following minor surgery and a month's rehabilitation at Etaples, Charles rejoined his unit on 17th September 1916 and a month later he was wounded again, by a bomb fragment to the left leg and evacuated to Bradford War Hospital in England. Incredibly, six months later he rejoined his unit in France for a further sixteen months, before being sent home deemed medically unfit for further active service. Charles returned to Melbourne aboard the SS "**Carpentaria**", disembarking on 4th October 1918. Fifteen days later he was discharged medically unfit due to chronic arthritis to the damaged left leg and invalided to Kangaroo Ground. By this stage, Shelley had been home for some months with his own disabilities.

Shelley's brother, Robert, died in Richmond, five years later in 1921, aged 60, and was buried in Queenstown Cemetery. Throughout WW1, as editor of the "*Evelyn Observer*", he had kept the communities of the Eltham Shire advised of the enlistments, movements, losses, returns and "*Welcome Home*" events for all those local men who had volunteered and served in the Great War. Sadly, he never got to see the construction of the Eltham Shire's Memorial Tower at Garden Hill or its dedication in 1926, with his son's name embossed as one of local volunteers who had made the supreme sacrifice. With "*no known grave*" at Fleurbaix, Robert J. Harris is commemorated in France on Panel 16 at VC Corner of the Australian Cemetery Memorial at Fromelles.

With his knowledge of the Kinglake area, Shelley was appointed as one of the first Park Rangers in Victoria in 1928. Later, "*Shelley's Track*" in the Kinglake State Forest was named in his honour. Shelley died at the Austin Hospital on 8th June 1936, aged 72, and was buried with his parents at Queenstown. Shelley's sister-in-law, Sophie, died at Kangaroo Ground in 1942, aged 71. Two years later, her youngest son, aged 40, enlisted at Mataranka, NT, on 3rd July 1944 as VX149097, Craftsman, William **Wallace** Shelley Harris and served with the 1st Motor Transport Workshop (AEME) in the Pacific islands during WW2 until his discharge on 18th February 1946.

Charles died in Greensborough on 14th January 1957, aged 67, after closure of the Queenstown Cemetery. He was buried instead at Kangaroo Ground Cemetery. As his death was accepted by the Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) as being war caused, he was buried officially by the Australian Office of War Graves (OAWG), with his full service details embossed on his plaque. Wallace died nearly twenty years later on 21st June 1975, aged 71, and is buried near his older brother Charles.

Over almost 50 years, the Harris family men had served in three wars, with one in the Boer War, three in WW1 from two different generations, with one Killed In Action in France and two returning, and a third served in WW2.

Remarkably, Shelley Harris served in two wars and two Harris men served in two separate wars with the unique third given name of Shelley.

Annual General Meeting - Saturday 13th April 2024

To satisfy the requirements of the Society's rules, notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Eltham District Historical Society Incorporated will be held at 2.00pm on Saturday 13th April 2024, at the Eltham Senior Citizens' Centre.

The agenda of the Annual General Meeting is set out below in accordance with the rules:

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of 2022 Annual General Meeting
3. Reports
 - a. President's Report
 - b. Financial Report
 - c. Any other reports
4. Election of office bearers and ordinary members of committee, positions to be filled as follows:

President

Two Vice Presidents

Society Secretary

Treasurer/Membership Secretary

Ordinary Committee Members (minimum of three members)
5. Election of Membership Sub-Committee (three members)
6. Fixing of entrance fee (if any) and annual subscription
7. Any other business of which at least two weeks notice has been given to members



It should be noted that under the Society's rules nominations for all positions are to be made at the meeting.

Since 1967 our members have helped to maintain and grow our Society and without their valued contributions, as well as assistance from Eltham and Nillumbik Shire Councils, we would not be where we are today.

Over the last year our committee has continued to help actively manage our Society, in a post pandemic phase. Members are welcome to contribute to our operation by becoming an office bearer or committee member. There are usually just five daytime committee meetings each year, alternating with our Society meetings. The workload is not great, with some members providing specialist skills and assistance. We do have a need for secretarial support to help maintain correspondence records and associated administration.

We warmly welcome fresh ideas to help us to continue to run a vibrant organisation to maintain our intention of promoting, encouraging and assisting with the preservation and conservation of places and records of historical importance within the Eltham district.

Grace Mitchell, nee Wheildon, 1916-2011, Baker and artist

Grace Wheildon was born in the middle of the Great War in 1916 in the wilds of Madalya near Yarram in South Gippsland. Her parents were Herbert Wheildon and Edith Mary Wheildon, nee Tulan. She was the second eldest of seven children. Grace was eight when her father died. The family left the small family farm and moved to Creswick, then to Ballarat.

She studied dressmaking, phycology (the study of algae) and journalism at night school and also worked to support her family. Grace's life saw many careers including working as a matron at the Creswick School of Mines, and dietician at the Royal Melbourne Hospital.

In 1948, aged 32 she married John Arthur Mitchell, aged 43.

They soon established their home in Mt Pleasant Road, near the corner of Main Road Eltham. John worked as a watchman, or in the area of security services. Grace worked as a tailor and dressmaker and also was a baker; managing a pastry shop business at the front of her home. Early in the marriage, Arthur had an accident that caused a head injury and he was unable to work.

It was at this time that Grace realised she needed to be home to care for her husband as well as earn an income. She established a popular pastry business that would last over 16 years.

Grace and Arthur were avid gardeners and would grow, wash and mince vegetables for pasties while Grace made the pastry. They cooked and minced their own meat for the pies and the fruit for the sweet pies came from their orchard at the rear of the property. She also baked scones and cakes.

With weekend visitors travelling to Eltham on the train for days trips her reputation grew as the spot for afternoon tea. So popular, was Grace's pastry shop that famous ballet dancer Robert Helpmann brought his friend U.S. actress Katherine Hepburn to visit in 1955 when she was in Melbourne to perform in a play.

After Arthur passed away in 1975, Grace enrolled in sculpture and other art courses.

On retirement from the pastry business at the age of 67 Grace enrolled at the new Phillip Institute of Technology in Bundoora (now RMIT) and completed a Fine Art's degree. Grace exchanged pastry and cake decorating for sculpting in clay and wood and printmaking.

She supported the Shillinglaw Cottage Preservation Campaign to preserve the cottage through its Flavour of Eltham community cookbook published in 1964 and later hosted cooking classes in the new Living and Learning Centre. She loved working in her studio and produced several sculptures and works of art in a variety of subjects and forms.

EDHS holds several photographs in our collection taken by Grace recording life in the local community. Arthur and Grace had one daughter Jenni. Grace was 95 years old when she passed away in 2011. She is buried with John at Eltham Cemetery.



Grace Mitchell - Pottery Class, Eltham Living and Learning Centre, 1988
Photograph - EDHS collection

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



Proudly supported by



*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)

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State Member for Eltham**

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



Community Bank
Hurstbridge, Eltham,
Diamond Creek,
Doreen-Mernda
and Kinglake

Early Community Banks were a reaction against the major banks withdrawal of services. As successful Community Bank Branches returned a dividend to their communities new branches were proposed in well banked locations. Eltham was one of these communities. All the major banks were present in Main Road, but they weren't delivering a community income stream, which could grow along with the banking business. The Eltham Community Bank Branch was established to create an income stream for community groups and clubs, feeding into community life and back into the local economy. It also brought further choice and competition to Main Road.

After thirteen and a half years we take great pride that our Eltham Community Bank Branch has provided financial support for so many local groups, clubs and projects. We've entered into collaborative projects with Nillumbik Shire Council, partnered with Eltham Rotary and other not for profit groups to get worthwhile projects over the line. Sometimes our contributions respond to an expressed community need, such as the rebuilding of the Eltham North Adventure Playground after its devastating loss through fire/arson. The public outpouring of grief was enormous and the desire to put things right was echoed by local and state government. Providing grants is always satisfying, but finding ways to multiply our funds is even better and, on this project, a dollar-for-dollar matching resulted in a community fundraising effort of \$34,000.

Some groups have built strong and productive relationships over many years and it's their members' support for the Eltham Branch which has helped to drive its growth. The North Eltham Wanderers Cricket Club and Eltham Redbacks Soccer Club are two great examples of clubs which understand the importance of mutual support. The Branch can continue its support when members can support our business. When a project like the redevelopment of grounds and club rooms come around, we can be ready to support fit outs and special equipment.

There are some groups we have worked with since they began. The Branch staff know many of the members and the relationship with the committees is close and supportive. The Eltham Men's Shed is a perfect example. They have grown from an idea, and a small temporary shed, into a substantial organisation with a permanent presence, providing outstanding service to the community.

It's a privilege to work with so many people intent on making our community a better place to live. We are proud of the role the Eltham Branch has played in supporting the volunteers who contribute so much to community well-being.