

# Newsletter

No. 283 August 2025



## War Memorials

Jim Connor

On Saturday 5th July 2025 our EDHS heritage excursion was to the Kangaroo Ground War Memorial Park. Ross McDonald, who had a family member die in the First World War, provided an informative and passionate reflection on the reason this significant memorial exists. Our visit also commemorated the 80th anniversary of the completion of World War Two. Victory in Europe was achieved on 8th May 1945 and victory in the Pacific on 15th August that year.

While the Memorial Tower at Kangaroo Ground is the largest war memorial in our district it is one of many memorials dedicated to those who have lost their lives representing our country.

Many small communities within the then Shire of Eltham established memorials recognising those from their local areas. Some were in the form of Rolls of Honour held in community halls, churches or elsewhere on public display. Obelisks are also used to record and commemorate.

Some larger memorials exist in Main Road, Eltham, in Diamond Creek, Panton Hill and at Christmas Hills, to name a few. Such places play an important part in services on ANZAC Day, Remembrance Day and at other times.

These are a regular reminder of those who have served Australia, in different eras during times of conflict, such as the Boer, First and Second World Wars, as well as in Korea, Borneo, Malaya, Vietnam and Afghanistan.

These are also a reminder of the loss experienced by many family members and friends in our district who were connected to those who served. At times the effects of such loss and sacrifice can ripple across generations. This should not be forgotten as it has been influential in shaping our country and our local communities.

Lest we forget.

*History is not always way back when; it can be here and now*

## Our Next Meeting

2.00pm Saturday 9th August 2025

Eltham Senior Citizen's Centre

Library Place, Eltham



Heritage excursion 5th July 2025



Roll of Honour - Eltham Library

Photographs - Jim Connor

## Heritage Excursion

2.00pm Saturday 6th Sept. 2025

St Helena Cemetery

See further details on page 2

## Next Meeting - 2.00pm Saturday 9th August 2025

Our next meeting at **2.00pm on Saturday 9th August 2025** will be held at our usual meeting venue, the **Eltham Senior Citizens' Centre in Library Place, Eltham**.

At this meeting, author, historian and publisher Dr Judith Buckrich, who is best known for her histories of Melbourne people, places and institutions, will speak about her latest book *Yarra Birrarung: Artists, Writers and the River*, which is an illustrated history of life on the Yarra. Through the lens of artists and writers, the book explores how life has flourished on the river, including recreation, industry and land use, as well as infrastructure, natural history and social history.

Judith will focus her talk on areas of local interest to our members and will have copies of her book for sale.

We look forward to sharing this meeting with you. Members and guests are welcome to attend.



Dr Judith Buckrich  
Photograph - Judith's website

## Excursion - Saturday 6th September - St Katherine's Church and Cemetery, St Helena

Our Spring excursion is to St Helena and its beautiful Church and Cemetery in its rural setting perched high on a little hill. St Katherine's Anglican Church was built in 1858, by Anthony Beale as a memorial to his late wife Katherine. It was later burnt down then faithfully restored. The cemetery is a rare example in Victoria of a traditional English parish church with its private graveyard and is of State Significance.

We will meet Charlotte Chidell, a Church parishioner who has recently published a creative biography of Katherine Rose Beale *This Still Heath*. She will provide some insight into the lives of Anthony and Rose Beale, the history of the church and highlight some of the people laid to rest in the cemetery, including members of the pioneer Beale family and artist Walter Withers.

We will be also given an exclusive peek inside the beautiful Rose Chapel with its stained-glass windows of local historical significance, commemorating casualties of the Beale family in World War One. Charlotte will have copies of her book available for sale (\$35 each). A gold coin donation towards the church upkeep is requested.

Our excursion to St Katherine's Church and Cemetery, at 277-279 St Helena Road, St Helena will commence at **2pm on Saturday 6th September 2025. Meet in front of the chapel.** Parking is available a short distance from the site on Anthony Beale Reserve, off St Helena Road, St Helena.



St Katherine's Anglican Church - 2016  
Photograph - Jim Connor



St Helena Cemetery - 2016  
Photograph - Jim Connor



At the Eltham District Historical Society we often receive enquiries asking for information about our local history, though sometimes we need to redirect these to the Eltham & Districts Historical Society in New Zealand or to the Eltham Society in England. However, it is rare for an enquiry to be initiated by a four year old interested in finding out about a local structure of historical significance.

This occurred recently when a young boy asked what is the finial on the roof of the Eltham South Pre School that he attends. He wanted to know what this sculpture was made from and what does it mean. His interest also resulted in others becoming involved.

As an answer was not readily available there, his enquiry was passed onto Nillumbik Shire Council, as it is a Council building. Our Society was subsequently asked by Council whether we could assist with any details we held, which we were then able to provide.

Eltham South Pre School is a significant building designed by Charles Duncan (1933 - 2022), who was a prominent local architect during the 1960s -1970s. He is more well known for his residential designs than organisational buildings and was responsible for designing many houses, particularly in the north eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Charles Duncan was respected for his skills in layout and selection of materials. There is an active movement of appreciation of his modernist style houses, with a dedicated following of enthusiastic owners and purchasers.

He, like some other architects, was clearly influenced by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright in designing to suit and respect the topography of a site, as well as the materials selected, including the internal use of timber.

As part of our research, we located a report undertaken by Heritage Victoria in 2010 titled "Survey of post - war built heritage in Victoria. Stage 2", which contains a detailed assessment of the Eltham Pre School. Information there included "The parallel development of the organic style – informed by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and independent experiments by local designers such as Alistair Knox – inevitably spread to kindergarten design."

"As this organic style lent itself to the use of decorative encrustations and non-orthogonal geometry, the later 1960s also saw a resurgence of kindergartens being designed in a more whimsical style to appeal to the sensibilities of a young child. A key example was the Eltham South Pre School (Charles Duncan, 1965), which not only revived the triangular plan used by Robert Eggleston at Bendigo over a decade earlier, but added a bell-cast slate-clad roof with a huge metal spire."

"Internally, the architect used low pelmets in a deliberate attempt to scale the playroom to a child's proportion; this interesting (and, at the time, controversial) approach was echoed in the bathroom area, where miniature timber partitions defined the toilet stalls."



Eltham South Pre School with finial  
Photograph - Jim Connor

The following comments about the roof top finial, which was designed and created by local sculptor Matcham Skipper, are also relevant: "The most striking element in the composition, however, was an ornate sculptured iron finial atop the roof, designed by Matcham Skipper, a noted local sculptor and one of the founding members of the nearby Montsalvat artists' colony."

Assembled in six weeks from waste metal leftover from drop forging, the sculpture was, at 14 feet (4.26 metres) high, said to be the largest finial in Australia. By Skipper's own admission, its vaguely foliated form was inspired by the music of Dorian Le Gallienne, a noted local composer who had died in 1963. Skipper's finial was installed (by volunteer labour) on 16 August; two weeks later, a champagne supper and fashion show was held to raise funds to cover its costs. The kindergarten was finally completed in October 1966 at a cost of \$17,000."

This report also mentions:

"The finial itself also holds a significant place in the career of sculptor Matcham Skipper, who is best known as a jeweller, silversmith and creator of small pieces (eg. Monash University's ceremonial mace; the Shire of Nillumbik's mayoral chain\*). Although he has produced artwork specifically for architectural contexts, these are generally small-scaled, such as the crucifixes at Newman College Chapel and St Margaret's Church, Eltham, and the Stations of the Cross at the Church of St. Mary Immaculate, Ivanhoe."

"Larger public art commissions are rare; examples include the Whittaker Memorial at Port Melbourne (project only), an outdoor sculpture at Eltham College, and a fountain at Hurstbridge High School. The finial at Eltham South Kindergarten stands out amongst these as one of Skipper's largest commissions, and one of the relative few that represent a fundamental element in an architectural composition."

So the enquiry initiated by this interested four year old resulted in a refreshed consideration of the history of the building, as well as the rooftop finial.

It is indeed encouraging to see aspects of our local history engaging our younger generations ..... as well as our older ones.

Source: Survey of post - war built heritage in Victoria - Stage 2 - Heritage Victoria 2010

\* Editor's note - Matcham Skipper and Myra Skipper created the Shire of Eltham Presidential Chain of Office in 1976. This became the Shire of Nillumbik Mayoral Chain of Office following the municipal restructure process in 1994, which established the Shire of Nillumbik.



Matcham Skipper at work  
\* Photograph - SEPP Collection



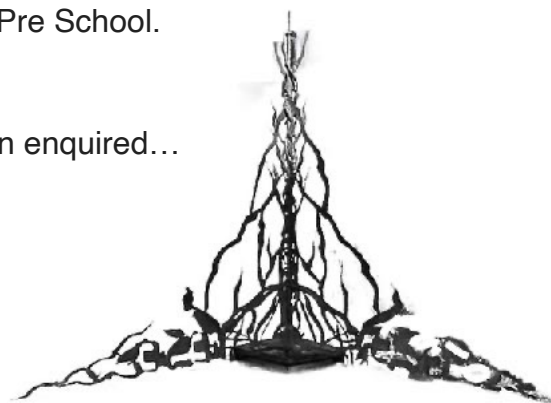
Shire of Eltham Presidential Chain of Office by Matcham and Myra Skipper  
Photograph - Nillumbik Shire Council

The question was asked by an observant four year old child as he gazed up to admire the large metal sculpture which adorns the roof of the Eltham South Pre School.

It's called a finial, replied the teacher.

This answer sparked further interest from the child who then enquired...

- “What is a finial?”
- “What is it made of?”
- “Who made it?”
- “How did it get on the roof?”



The Finial

What wonderful questions!

His curiosity was rewarded by a rich discussion about how the large metal sculpture became part of the lovely building that is Eltham South Pre School. It was explained that the finial was designed and constructed by local sculptor, Matcham Skipper.

Other children also became interested in the finial and soon they were painting their own finials using black paint on white paper. We used a light box to illuminate a photograph of the actual finial which children used as a template. Following on from this, some children chose to design and construct a 3D finial sculpture using thin wire, aluminium foil and an abundance of imagination!

The sculptor Matcham Skipper reported listening to and being inspired by music from Dorian Le Gallienne, a local composer, as he worked on his finial, so we decided to listen to this music as the children worked on their sculptures.

We now have many finials to decorate our space at Kinder, and the children have thoroughly enjoyed working on them. This experience has been a lovely connection between our current students, the history of our building and even perhaps past students who have wondered:

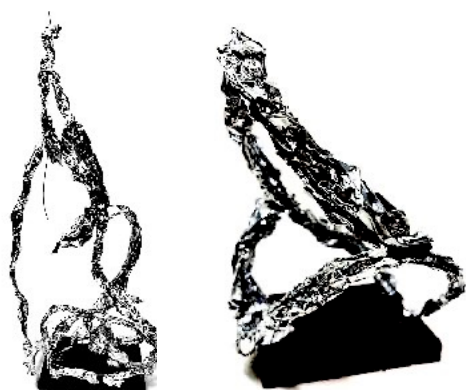
*“What is that on top of Kinder?”*

We hope the finial inspires questions and creativity for generations of future children at Eltham South Pre School.

Rachel Arnel is an experienced early childhood educator at Eltham South Pre School, where she has a long association: starting when as a high school student she did a work placement, then as a young mother when her twins Sam and Isabelle (now 20 years old) enjoyed their time there.

### Some of the ‘new’ finials and artwork

Photographs - Rachel Arnel





The Hurstbridge Line has influenced suburban development along its 27.39 km length since its creation, some 123 years ago, and still remains an essential passenger service in 2025. Yet most users know little of its chequered history and its numerous, sometimes explosive, interactions with key identities along its route; such as artist, Walter Withers.

Nor its chronological association to world events. Such as, Victoria being the first colonial state in Australia to build railways in 1851, when the Melbourne and Hobson’s Bay Railway Company built four stations and laid 2.5 miles (4 kms) of track across the Yarra River from Flinders Street to the new port facilities at Sandridge (*now known as Station Pier*); influenced by the discovery of gold.



The first steam train left Flinders Street for Port Melbourne at noon on 12th September 1854, pulled by one of four locomotives made urgently in Melbourne, becoming the first steam engines to be manufactured in the Southern Hemisphere. The four steam engines previously ordered from England, called **Melbourne**, **Sandridge**, **Yarra** and **Victoria** finally arrived in 1855.

Melbourne and Hobson’s Bay Railway Company  
train arriving at Flinders Street terminus - 1854  
Etching: S.T.Gill - State Library of Victoria

The evolution of our railways wasn’t helped by the later State Railways operating out of Spencer Street, whilst the lines operating out of Flinders Street remained privately owned until 1878, when bought out by the Victorian Government. Yet both networks still operated separately for 13 years, as there was no rail connection between these two Melbourne stations before 1891. By the mid-1880s the only suburban lines in existence were to Port Melbourne, St Kilda, Brighton, Williamstown, Hawthorn, Essendon and Oakleigh.

The direct line from Princes Bridge to Heidelberg, as used before the City Loop, did not eventuate until 21st October 1901 due to fifteen years of protests, legal injunctions and engineering difficulties over its proposed route through Jolimont and Collingwood. Although appearing to be a “**not in my backyard**” issue, it was also influenced by the land being compulsory acquired from inadequately compensated landowners.

Whereas ample funding from willing communities further out saw construction of a 2.5 mile (4km) stretch of track between Clifton Hill and Alphington in 1884, known as the “**nowhere to nowhere line**”. Frustrated residents banded together, acquired a railway carriage to which a Danks gas motor was fitted, and then operated an approved shuttle service. The “Gas Tram Car” carried up to 40 passengers per trip, between 9 am and 5 pm, with four morning return trips and five in the afternoon.

Alphington was finally connected to Heidelberg by rail in May 1886. Yet due to the ongoing hold-ups on the line south of Clifton Hill, the train service from Heidelberg went to Spencer Street station on a 12¾ miles (20.4 km) circuitous route to Clifton Hill, then on previously laid tracks via Royal Park, which took 1.5 hrs, whilst a cab or tram took only 1 hour. Yet the Diamond Valley Line nearly didn’t happen, as will be explained in our next newsletter.

Sources: “By Hill and By Dale” – History of the Hurstbridge Line by Marc Fiddian; The Argus, 13 Sep 1854; EDHS Archival Files & Notes by Harry Gilham; National Museum of Australia; Wikipedia “Melbourne & Hobson Bay Railway Company”.

## The Coming of the Railway to Eltham

The coming of the railway to Eltham in 1902 must have greatly reduced cartage costs and times to the city markets for market gardeners. But the railway also increased the attraction of the town as a picnic destination for city folk. Alan Marshall cites a local, Mr Orford, on the growing craze. "During the wattle season, wattle trains came to Eltham frequently. The visitors roamed the creek pulling great arms full of wattle blossom to take back with them to Melbourne."<sup>29</sup>

The treatment of the early Eltham water reserve (for watering stock) on the east bank of the Diamond Creek opposite the West's lower creek-flat holdings, which had been gazetted in 1866, is indicative of changing perceptions of the role of creek-side land in the town of Eltham. This water reserve land is now known as Wingrove Park.

In 1913 a Mr A.E. Haughton of Kangaroo Ground wrote to the local paper to argue against allowing the fencing-in of the "pretty reserve by Wingroves". The reserve had clearly not been used for its original



purpose of watering stock for some time, and Haughton feared that if it were now to be used for grazing the natural vegetation could be destroyed. "Then instead of your reserve being for the people it would virtually be from the people. Citizens of Melbourne have discovered that Eltham has lovely picnicking places. This traffic will be worth a lot to Eltham if it caters for it properly. Eltham was lucky to have such reserves when the towns of Diamond Creek and Hurstbridge lacked them."<sup>30</sup>

After WWI there was political pressure for the same reserve to be subdivided for Soldier Settlement. As a consequence, in 1925 Robert Poole from the Surveyor General's Office inspected the reserve, finding it "very picturesque" and located on one of the "picnic and tourist highways within easy reach of Melbourne". Travellers used it frequently for leisure and picnics. The remnant original forest provided shade and the flat areas were well used for cricket and other sports. He considered its title of water reserve misplaced. Accordingly in 1927 the land became a reserve for public recreation, later named Wingrove Park.<sup>31</sup>

The fruit-stealing proclivities of some of the picnickers had long been a source of friction with the growers along the creek flats. In 1899 Evelyn Falkiner took prisoner one of a group of picnickers who were stealing his cherries and damaging his trees.<sup>32</sup>

Locals also stole fruit from orchards in the vicinity of the Wests, and accounts in the local papers give incidental clues about the type of farming going on. In 1914 Robert West took a Charles Roach to court after repeated thefts of fruit, and in particular quinces.<sup>33</sup> In 1928 two men were charged with stealing quinces from the orchard of Evelyn Falkiner.<sup>34</sup>

### Sources:

Cultural Heritage Significance Assessment & Guidelines - 2 Bell Street, Eltham - Shire of Nillumbik

29 Ibid., p.62.

30 Evelyn Observer and Bourke East Record 24 January 1913 p 3 Victoria Government Gazette 31 December 1880. NO.144 0.3311.

31 Eltham and Whittlesea Shires Advertiser and Diamond Creek Valley Advocate, 6 December 1918, p.3. Advertiser (Hurstbridge), 11 March 1927 p.3. Victorian Heritage Database entry for Eltham Watering Place Reserve Main Road Eltham, [http://vhd.heritage.vic.gov.au/places/result\\_detail/63522?print=true](http://vhd.heritage.vic.gov.au/places/result_detail/63522?print=true), accessed 10 December 2011.

32 Mercury and Weekly Courier, 1 December 1889 p.2. The rest of the party attempted to free the "prisoner" but Falkiner prevailed and the offender was sentenced to a month in gaol.

33 Evelyn Observer and Bourke East Record, 24 April 1914, p.2. He took a man to court for repeated thefts of fruit.

34 Advertiser (Hurstbridge). 23 March 1928 p.4

On the weekend of the 29th and 30th March 2025 the MG Car Club Victoria (MGCC) held their third Rob Roy Revival meeting, which this year focused on celebrating '100 years of Ford Australia'. While there was plenty of competition for many interesting and different vehicles, including some classic cars, there was also a festival atmosphere, with many people dressed in vintage 50s and 60s fashion.

The Rob Roy property in Clintons Road, Smiths Gully (Christmas Hills) has a valued local history. It was a Shetland pony stud owned by W.E. Clinton, a former Mayor of Heidelberg. Over time the property progressed to being known as Clinton's Pleasure Grounds, where people could experience picnicking and other recreational activities.



Phil Gray in his 1934 Ford special at the start line  
Photograph - Jim Connor - 30th March 2025

The origins of hillclimb use there go back to 1935, when representatives from the then Light Car Club of Australia inspected the property with a view to establishing a hillclimb venue. The first meeting was held on 1st February 1937, and the track fully bituminised in 1939. Many meetings were conducted over succeeding years, but in January 1962 the hillclimb venue was abandoned after bush fires burnt out the access bridge to the track and repair costs were too expensive.

In 1992 the MGCC obtained a lease on the property, and reconstruction began, including re-laying the entire surface, improving access roads, and installation of guard rails. A major improvement project commenced there in May 2022, with additional spectator facilities and an upgrade of the track and internal roads. The inaugural Rob Roy Revival was held on Sunday 19th March 2023.

### “Little Eltham” farms

For well over half a century following European settlement, the Eltham district was very much a farming community. The small village that grew up in Holloway's “Little Eltham” subdivision serviced the local farmers and even within the village much of the land was used as small farms, particularly on the larger central lots along the Diamond Creek.

It was not until the 1910s and 20s that there was any significant residential development outside the village boundaries. Even then the large Montmorency Farm to the west and the Belle Vue Farm to the north took many years to become fully developed.

Families such as the Bollas, Fabbros, Wests, Spesottos, and Shillinglaws were engaged in farming activities along the Diamond Creek. The Fabbros and some other Eltham South farmers, continued with remnants of their market garden activities into the 2000s.



c1900 View of Eltham - small farms along the Diamond Creek valley  
Photograph - EDHS collection



*Due to the 80th anniversary of the completion of World War Two we thought it appropriate to publish the following article from the book Nillumbik Now and Then by Marguerite Marshall, originally published in 2008. The images in this article are not from Nillumbik Now and Then.*

A magnificent 360 degree panorama awaits the visitor who braves the 53 steep winding steps and four long ladders to the top of one of Victoria's most unusual war memorials - the Kangaroo Ground Tower of Remembrance.<sup>1</sup>

The view covers Diamond Valley, Melbourne city and extends to the Kinglake escarpment, the mountains beyond Healesville, the Dandenong Ranges, Port Phillip Bay, the You Yangs and Mt Macedon. The 12 metre high memorial soars 237 metres above sea level on Garden Hill, one of the highest locations in the Yarra Valley.

The Kangaroo Ground Tower standing in the Eltham War Memorial Park, Yarra Glen Road, honours those who died in the two World Wars, and the conflicts in Korea, Borneo, Malaya and Vietnam. A 2.8 metre cabin on top for Country Fire Authority fire spotters, helps save the splendid surrounding bush from the ravages of fire.

The tower stands on the site of Kangaroo Ground's first War Memorial. Following World War One, residents had bought two acres (0.8ha) of land, and on its highest point built a cairn on which they mounted a flagpole.

Then a local resident, Mr W Wippell, suggested a memorial park be established there.

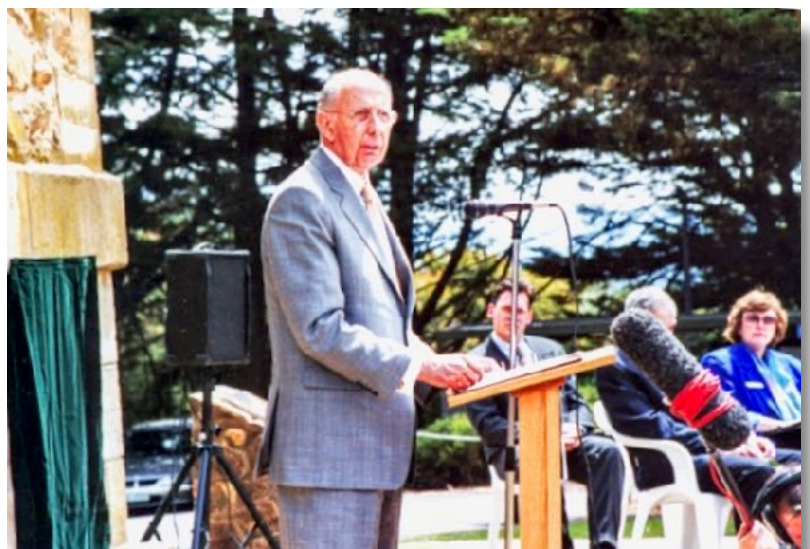
At a social gathering at the home of Cr Basil Hall of Panton Hill, it was suggested a tower be built in the style of the old English and Scottish watchtowers.<sup>2</sup> This reflected the strong Scottish influence of Kangaroo Ground's first European settlers from the 1840s.

In 1920 a public committee formed to establish the tower and the public generously donated to the project. Architects Arthur Stephenson and Percy Meldrum, designed the tower without charge, from a sketch by the artist Harold Herbert. Builder was George Rousell of Mordialloc using stone donated by Professor William and Dr Ethel Osborne from their nearby property Kangaroo Hall. The tower was reinforced with concrete and faced with sandstone rubble and concrete quoins and dressings.

On Armistice Day, November 11th, 1926, His Excellency the Governor-General, Lord Stonehaven, unveiled the 1914-1918 honour plaque before a crowd of 1500. The committee then entrusted the care of the tower and grounds to the Eltham Shire Council. In 1927, the Shire built the nearby caretaker's cottage.

On November 16th, 1951, the Victorian Governor, Sir Dallas Brooks, dedicated the residence and an additional plaque on the tower to honour those who had died in World War Two.

In 2001 the Governor of Victoria, John Landy, dedicated further names of those who died in the conflicts of Korea, Borneo, Malaya and Vietnam.



John Landy, AC, CVO, MBE, Governor of Victoria  
Rededication Ceremony, War Memorial Tower - 8th November 2001  
Photograph - Nillumbik Shire Council

By 1948 the tower had become a fire spotter tower. But this led to controversy in the late 1960s, with the Forest Commission's proposal to build a spotter's cabin on top, for the protection of the spotter and his equipment. At first, the RSL branches of Eltham, Montmorency, Hurstbridge and Panton Hill objected, concerned it would detract from the tower's function as a memorial. However in March 1971, the Lower Yarra CFA Group organised a petition for the cabin with 500 signatories and it was finally built in 1974.

Despite fears, the cabin has not prevented the tower from remaining a revered memorial. As a watchtower, the cabin has been valuable in the Forest Commission's fire watching network, saving lives and beautiful bushland.

In 2008 a viewing platform was opened for shelter and information about the local area. It is called Moor-rul, a Wurundjeri name describing the area's fertile soils. The hill's upper sections contain remains of basalt, giving rise to the black volcanic soil, which differs markedly from the soils of surrounding areas. Moor-ul consists of 16 interpretive panels, detailing the local Aboriginal and European history, geology, flora and fauna. Moor-rul was built by representatives of local historical societies, the Country Fire Authority, the Returned Services League and the Wurundjeri people, with assistance from the Nillumbik Reconciliation group and financial assistance from the Nillumbik Shire Council.<sup>3</sup>



Moor-rul Viewing Platform - designed by architect Dennis Ward  
Photograph - July 2021- Jim Connor

### References

1. Bick, D and Kellaway, C Shire of Eltham Heritage Study 1992 p678
2. The Tower of Remembrance and War Memorial Park 1919 -2001 EDHS 2002 p20
3. Gilham, H, President, EDHS Opening of the Viewing Platform at Kangaroo Ground Shire of Nillumbik pp 1-2

## Membership Subscriptions for 2025 - 26 were due on 1st July

We hope you value being a member of the Eltham District Historical Society and will continue to support our Society by renewing your membership for the 2025 - 2026 year.

### Membership of our Society offers:

- a Society meeting every two months with guest speakers giving presentations, mostly about local history, heritage excursions around local areas, an informative newsletter emailed every two months, opportunities to share social activities and advocacy activity on matters of historical significance. Support by our members helps us to value and record our local history, for now and the future.

Your payment would be welcome, by direct credit to **EDHS Bendigo Bank BSB 633 000 Account 141820902**, or to our Treasurer Robert Marshall at our August meeting (including by credit card), or by mail to EDHS, 728 Main Road, Eltham 3095. Single membership \$25.00 - Family \$30.00

We appreciate those members who have already renewed their membership.



# Experience Eltham Cemetery

Julia Drew

## Restoring Honour: The Story of a Stolen Memorial



The memorial on 11 November 2020

15 August 2020 marked the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. However, the milestone passed with little public recognition, as Melbourne was deep into its second of its six COVID lockdowns. No services or commemorative events could be held, and the solemnity of the occasion overshadowed by the pandemic's restrictions.

In the months leading up to the anniversary, the Trust received funding to install a memorial in recognition of this significant event. The plaque, standing 1.1 metres tall, was inset into a stone carved by Jock Langslow (grandson of Sir Sidney Nolan) and placed at the roundabout—a central landmark in the original areas of the cemetery, where hundreds of veterans have been laid to rest. Due to lockdown, the plaque was installed quietly just days before the anniversary. Despite the absence of a formal ceremony, it stood as a dignified and lasting tribute, a striking feature for visitors entering the cemetery.



The bare stone 24 June 2024.

On 24 June 2024, while approaching the roundabout, I sensed something was amiss. As I drew closer, I realised the usual sparkle—the glint of sunlight reflecting off the bronze—was absent. The memorial was gone. The lugs remained embedded in the stone, the bronze having been cut away. Marks on the stone indicated that a crowbar or similar tool had been used to pry back the metal, exposing the fixings.

We believe the theft occurred overnight, as multiple staff members had seen the plaque intact the previous day. The cemetery gates are locked overnight for vehicles, meaning those responsible had to enter on foot. Given the plaque's size and weight, it is likely that multiple people were involved in removing it from the grounds. The effort required to cut it free and transport it suggests a premeditated act rather than an opportunistic theft. A police report was lodged, but unfortunately, nothing eventuated. Given the effort required to remove it, it was unlikely taken for personal collection. More likely, it was melted down for scrap or destroyed. The loss was not just physical—it was the desecration of a piece of the cemetery's history, a tribute meant to honour those who had served.



The replacement memorial, taken 9 December 2024.

Thankfully, through the cemetery's insurance, we were able to have the memorial remade, and just before Christmas 2024, it was reinstalled. We are deeply grateful to the team at DP Jones & Co in Kyabram, who crafted and installed both the original and its replacement. This plaque holds more than just a name or date; it is a symbol of remembrance for all veterans laid to rest within the cemetery. While its theft was a disappointing moment in the cemetery's history, its reinstatement reaffirms our commitment to preserving and honouring their legacy.



*We encourage you to support our valued local sponsors*



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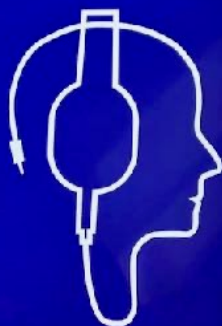


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The Green Wedge Shire

\*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)

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

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