



No. 284 October 2025

War Memorial Tower at Kangaroo Ground

Jim Connor

Restoration works have recently commenced on the War Memorial Tower located within the Kangaroo Ground War Memorial Park.

In the officer's report to the Nillumbik Shire Council meeting on 26th August 2025 it was stated that the War Memorial Tower is a significant landmark, both historically and socially, serving as a symbol of the community's connection to and remembrance of those affected by war. It is also valued for its aesthetic qualities, particularly the skilled use of local sandstone in its construction.

Over time, the tower has naturally aged, and some elements have deteriorated. Conservation works scheduled to be fully completed by 13th February 2026 will restore its original character and ensure it remains a lasting place of remembrance for future generations.

Works will include:

- Rendering and stone repairs
- Repointing between the sandstone blocks
- Timber landing restoration
- Restoration of deteriorated windows
- Internal painting
- Waterproofing of the roof deck
- Cleaning and clearing of the drainage system

Following a detailed tender selection process Nillumbik Shire Council selected O.C Stone Pty Ltd, a contractor experienced in heritage restorations. Their expertise in stonework, repointing, and detailed conservation aligns well with the War Memorial Tower requirements.



War Memorial Tower under restoration
Photograph - Jim Connor

The \$278,836 project will conserve and restore the historic structure, ensuring it remains a lasting place of remembrance and a much-loved destination for both the local community and visitors. This project is funded by Council, with support from the Victorian Government's Restoring Community War Memorials and Avenues of Honour 2024–25 Program (Stage Two), which contributed \$30,000.

Source: Nillumbik Shire Council

Stories we tell of history not only shape our past, they also shape our future

Our Next Meeting

7.30pm Wednesday 8th October 2025

Eltham Senior Citizen's Centre

Library Place, Eltham

Our Next Heritage Excursion

2.00pm Saturday 1st November 2025

Eltham Cemetery

See further details on page 2

Next Meeting - 7.30pm Wednesday 8th October 2025

Our next meeting at **7.30pm on Wednesday 8th October 2025** will be held at our usual meeting venue, the **Eltham Senior Citizens' Centre in Library Place, Eltham.**

In 2016 the Welcome to Eltham community group was set up in anticipation of Syrian refugees temporarily moving into Judge Book Village.

What started out as plans to host a BBQ to welcome new neighbours, exploded into a community movement that received national attention.

This meeting will feature a presentation by Nina Kelabora about the Welcome to Eltham experience.



Nina was actively involved throughout this initiative. With Lara McKinley and a dedicated committee, the group produced a book, titled *Welcome : a gift to you, our new neighbours, from the extended Eltham community.*

We look forward to welcoming you to our meeting and hearing from Nina about some of the experiences and outcomes achieved during this community based project.

Please note this meeting is at **7.30pm on Wednesday 8th October 2025.**

Heritage Excursion - Saturday 1st November - Eltham Cemetery Tour

Our last heritage excursion on 6th September was to visit St Katherine's Anglican Church and Cemetery, in St Helena, which is a rare example in Victoria of a traditional English parish church with a small associated private graveyard.

Our next excursion will also be to a cemetery; this time to the Eltham Cemetery, which is very different in size, topography, layout and the number of graves therein. It is much larger, being spread over 12 acres adjoining Montsalvat.



Eltham Cemetery plays a significant role in recording and honouring our local history.

During this visit we will reflect on the many creative individuals who are interred there. While you may be aware of some we will talk about, there may be others who are not so well known.

We will also be able to view some of the recent design initiatives undertaken by the Eltham Cemetery Trust.

Join us for our excursion to Eltham Cemetery on the corner of Mt Pleasant and Metery roads, Eltham. It will commence at **2pm on Saturday 1st November 2025. We will meet in the carpark entered from Metery Road.**

This walk is on uneven ground in places. This free excursion is for Society members. Dogs are not permitted.

Fred Looks Back

This article by Linley Hartley is from the Diamond Valley News c1985.

Teaching himself German again after 70 years is just one of the many tasks Fred Golgerth, of Greensborough, has undertaken and succeeded in during his lifetime. As the two year old tenth child of a German descendent, Fred learnt to speak German from an Aunt.

But World War 1 was raging. Fred's older brother had gone to Europe with the Australian forces, changing his name ... to to sound less German.

"I used to get my bottom slapped for speaking German at home," Fred said. Even his name was changed from Otto to the more anglicised Frederick.

Fred claims his involvement with Eltham started two years before he was born! His sister, two years older than him, was a babe in arms when his parents bought a piece of grazing property in Mount Pleasant Road.

"It was about 24 acres on a spur of Mt Pleasant," Fred said. "My parents bought it from Mr and Mrs Hughes. There was a two-room mud hut in wattle and daub that we lived in from time to time. "My parents had a dairy farm and dairy in West Coburg, and they bought the Mt Pleasant land to put the dry stock on.

"At one stage my mother got very ill and my older sister took my younger sister and myself to Eltham for four or five months. I went down to Eltham Primary School then."

That wasn't the only time Fred stayed in Eltham. His sister, Wilhemina, known as Willa, married Jim Watson who had the Eltham hotel for some years from the end of World War 1.

Pillar to post living was the way Fred described his youth, when he stayed with one married sister after another.



Watson's Eltham Hotel - Wilhemina Watson (Fred's sister) holding the reins
Photograph - EDHS SEPP collection

"After a while Willa and Jim lived in the big house at the top of Pitt Street, next to the Council depot, and the hotel was managed by Fitzsimons who had a big place near the river down there on Fitzsimons Lane.

There was no bridge in Fitzsimons Lane but we used to cross the river at a ford, rolling up our trouser legs so they wouldn't get wet, and carrying our shoes. I'd go down to visit some friends I had in Templestowe. And sometimes Jim Watson took his horse drawn lorry across the ford on his way to the brewery, instead of going down through Heidelberg."

"The bridge across the Yarra in Fitzsimons Lane was not built until 1961."

Fred Golgerth, was only a teenager when he was rolled off his pushbike under a car on the bend between Mt Pleasant Road and the Diamond Creek bridge.

He was hospitalised in the little hospital on the east side of Eltham village that served the district in those days. He still carries the scars of the burns he received from the exhaust pipe and recent x-rays have revealed several broken vertebrae. At the time of the accident he was treated for a dislocated neck and was in plaster from his hip to the base of his head for about seven months.

But nothing daunted Fred. Bouncing back he began work as an apprentice to a motor mechanic in Bell Street, Preston, a man who is still living (at 90) in Queensland and who still communicates with Fred frequently.

“He was like a father to me,” Fred declared. “He was a marine engineer as well, so I that as well as blacksmithing. They taught us properly then.”

After finishing his apprenticeship, Fred bought himself a 30 hundredweight Fargo truck and began his own contract carting business, doing most of the work for a firm called Carnegie’s and a subsidiary of that, Howard Radio.

It was in the office Fred met his wife.

“He taught me to drive the truck giving me lessons in my lunch hours up the Bourke Street and Flinders Street extension,” she said. “After work I’d have a driving lesson and all the girls from the Howard Radio would pile in the back to get a lift to Richmond Station.”

In the 1939 bushfires, the Mt Pleasant Road property was burnt out and the hut razed.

Two years later, Fred and Dorothy were married. Fred paid £7.15.0 (\$15.50) for the suit in which he was married. Dorothy had pulled out of the Women’s Air Training Corps to be married. Others with whom she trained went to Darwin and were in a convoy that was bombed.

Fred went into the garage business in Brighton and continued his cartage business for a while. His company was employed to do all Brown Gouge’s motor repairs and factory maintenance. Because Fred had a certificate to do steam repair work he often got jobs maintaining industrial boilers.

While he was in Brighton, Fred bought an eight-seater 1925 Silver Ghost Rolls Royce from Sir Keith Murdoch. When the couple moved to Rosanna in about 1943, it became a delivery van for the dairy they operated. “I thought I’d like to get back into a dairy business” Fred said. “We used to deliver the milk in the Rolls.

“But it was hard work. We couldn’t get the labour and we’d drive to the farm and pick up the milk cans, take them back to the dairy, cool the milk, bottle it and deliver it. The inspectors would come regularly and check the walls for bacteria.”



Fred Golgerth with daughter Carlene and the 1925 Rolls Royce
Photograph - supplied by Carlene Gregory

Fred was exhausted. The couple gave up the dairy and moved to Eltham to live on the old property where a weatherboard house had now been built. It wasn't a big house and the glassed in Rolls Royce limousine became the daytime nursery for the Golgerth's second daughter.

"We'd put her in there to sleep during the day." "Dorothy Golgerth was known to drive the Rolls at breakneck speed along Mt Pleasant Road".

Fred took some time off work then began driving a little local bus run by the Lyon Brothers before taking a maintenance job at the Athenaeum Club in the city. He'd ride an old Harley-Davidson to the station and travel into the city by train. Later, when the family moved to Pryor Street. (their house stood where McEwans car park is now) Fred could walk to and from the station.

"There was no resident doctor in the early days of Eltham," Fred said. "Dr Cordner used to come from Greensborough to a room in the old house next to the old grocery shop on the corner of York Street and Main Road, Eltham (the grocery shop is now the Eltham Feed and Grain Store).

The Golgerths lived in Eltham until "Dollar Day" – the day decimal currency became official. They eventually moved to Greensborough, when they have lived since.

Fred has had his share of interesting jobs since then, retiring at 65 seven years ago when he was working in the engineering department at Larundel. Recently, two of his older sisters and a brother died, within a month. They were all in their 80s. They all had a profound influence on Fred, especially during his youth.

His sharp wit and amusing anecdotes are the richer for his having been the youngest of a family that made the best of every circumstance. And now, as he enjoys his retirement, he is concentrating on relearning the language of his infancy; teaching himself German from tapes and a 'teach yourself' manual.

He is fiercely proud of his German ancestry and treasures the diary, written in German in Gothic script, kept by his grandparents during their journey to Australia.

Source: Diamond Valley News article

<https://victoriancollections.net.au/items/640e66ca115c75089023c29b>

WAS WOMAN FOUND IN WELL PUT IN IT?

The following article comes from the Diamond Valley Local, Tuesday February 16th 1954. It relates to a site at the southeastern corner of York Street and Main Road, Eltham. It contained a weatherboard shop and dwelling fronting Main Road and a brick bakery at the rear fronting York Street. The shop was at various times a baker's shop and a grocery shop. These buildings were demolished in 1979 and replaced by residential units named Bakehouse Court.

"Eltham Bakehouse was the scene of a drama whose details have never been cleared. Was the woman whose body was found in the old well inside the back part of the home murdered by her husband?"

Eltham bakehouse and residence now occupied by Mr Jim Arnett and family is one of the very old residences of Eltham. Mr J J Burgoyne, father of J N Burgoyne, so long known in Eltham in connection with the P.O. and store took over the bakery in 1896. At that time mystery was at its height, for the baker's wife had been found down the well.

Did she fall, or was she pushed? No one knows."

Many words have been written about the recent closure of the renowned literary journal Meanjin, due to a controversial decision by Melbourne University Publishing to no longer contribute funding support. Over the years Meanjin provided opportunities and encouragement for emerging and established writers to express and explore their views.

Many people reading recent comments in the media may not be aware of Eltham connections to the journal and to the publisher.

Meanjin was established in Brisbane in 1941 by Clem Christesen who three years later was persuaded to move south when the University of Melbourne offered to support his literary journal. He worked hard to keep Meanjin alive and remained editor there until 1975.

Clem with his wife Nina moved in 1945 to live in the historically important 'Stanhope' in Peter Street, Eltham and their property became a centre of attraction for many writers, artists and academics. Clem and Nina were well known and respected within the Eltham community and were members of the then Shire of Eltham Historical Society. Nina was an important



Clem and Nina Christesen
Photograph - EDHS Collection

academic and literary figure in her own right specialising in the field of Russian studies. She founded and was a teacher in the first Russian studies course in Australia at Melbourne University. Clem died in 2003 and Nina in 2001 and are both buried in the Eltham Cemetery.

.....but what of the Eltham connection to the Melbourne University Press, known since 2003 as Melbourne University Publishing. Stanley Simpson Addison was raised in South Australia, went to Adelaide University and joined the Red Cross during World War One where he served as a searcher going to field hospitals collecting detailed information on soldiers who were wounded, missing or dead. Later in the war he was involved in some secret research activities with the Royal Navy in the United Kingdom. Stanley with Vera, his wife, returned to Australia in 1920 where Stanley was employed as Assistant Registrar at the University of Melbourne. Here, Stanley played a substantial role in establishing Melbourne University Press and was inaugural director (1922 -1931).



Stanley Simpson Addison
Photograph - EDHS Collection

In 1938 he joined the Victorian Branch of the Australian Red Cross Society in the senior position of General Secretary. Then after retiring they moved to the 'High Acre' property opposite the general store in Kangaroo Ground, which at one stage Stanley owned.

During this time he was a Shire of Eltham Councillor (1949 - 1956) and Shire President in 1953. He was active in many community based initiatives including negotiating the connection of electricity services to the Kangaroo Ground, Smiths Gully and Panton Hill areas, development of the Eltham War Memorial Trust complex and establishment of various community and business related groups, including the Diamond Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Diamond Valley Community Hospital, where he was made a life member.

So while the closure of Meanjin is a deeply felt loss, especially in literary circles, it does remind us of notable individuals who have contributed to the history of the Eltham district.

The commuter chaos caused by recent repairs to the Eltham Trestle Bridge and the derailment at Clifton Hill on Sunday, 13th July 2025, confirmed the continuing need for our line; which has now been in service for 113 years since its completion to Hurstbridge. The joy of seeing Steam Engine No 183 and the “Red Rattler” carriages at Eltham station on Sunday, 31st August 2025 for the “Wattle Festival” at Hurstbridge, brought back memories of bygone days. Whilst 167 years ago and two years after the Eltham District Road Board was constituted in 1856, other private railway companies were forming and opening extra suburban lines to Brighton and Oakleigh, but not to the lower populated northeastern regions. The Princes Bridge station opened in 1859.

Twelve years later, the Eltham District Road Board had been reconstituted into the Eltham Shire Council and a gold enriched government was constructing a railway from Sale to Oakleigh. Yet as all government lines terminated at Spencer Street station and the suburban line to Oakleigh was privately owned and went to Flinders Street, an “Outer Circle” State line was instigated to traverse from Oakleigh to Spencer Street via Fairfield, Royal Park and North Melbourne. It’s construction however, raised hopes for Heidelberg residents of a branch line being linked to their district. As such, in 1876 two Bills for lines to Heidelberg were proposed, but failed when the McCulloch Government lost office. Yet the need for a North East line had been verified.

Then in 1878 the Department of Railways bought the Melbourne & Hobson Bay Railway Company and other private companies to establish the Victorian Railways (VR) and crucially acquired Flinders Street and Princes Bridge stations. Planning now commenced for a direct line to Heidelberg.

Major setbacks occurred in 1880, when construction of the initial section from Richmond to Alphington had to be deferred due to injunctions by both the Richmond and Collingwood Councils, and key local residents, objecting to the proposed route. Two years later tenders were called for building the first sanctioned 2.5 mile (4 km) section between Clifton Hill and Alphington, becoming the “*nowhere to nowhere line*”. Matters worsened due to a proposal to demolish Spencer Street station to allow for the westward expansion of the city centre, which was later defeated.

In 1884 approval was then given to extend the Clifton Hill-Alphington line the 2.2 miles (3.58km) to Heidelberg. It took two years to complete. However, with no direct route still available from Clifton Hill to Princes Bridge station, goods and passengers from Heidelberg endured the circuitous route on the line from Clifton Hill to Spencer Street. Even when the Clifton Hill to Collingwood link was completed on 8th May 1888, the final link between Collingwood and Princes Bridge station was still delayed due to legal injunctions. Yet the Heidelberg Line and station were officially opened on this day, with celebrations held in a hall next to the Old England Hotel.

After a landmark hearing in August 1889, the Full Court rejected the injunction by Mr John Sharp of Wellington Parade and work commenced. The link between Princes Bridge and Collingwood was opened on 21st October 1901 and a direct service to Heidelberg was finally established. The “Outer Circle” line was then progressively dismantled, for housing development and recreation uses, only to be proposed again 124 years later.

After the court’s ruling, hopes were bolstered in the Shire and a Bill was introduced in 1890 by Kangaroo Ground landowner and Local Member for Evelyn, Mr Ewen H. Cameron, MLA ¹. to now extend the Heidelberg Line to Hurst’s Bridge. But it wasn’t passed, due to strong opposition in Parliament to any extensions on lines that weren’t self-funding; which included the circuitous Heidelberg Line. Goods and produce from the Shire continued to be carted to city markets by road. It took three further years of lobbying and a Bill amendment to only extend the line to Eltham, plus a feasibility inspection by the Minister of Railways, before the revised Bill passed Parliament in 1893.

Yet passage of the Bill came at a cost, as the Eltham Line became the first extension built in Victoria under the new Railway Land Acquisition Act of 1893, which required the land for the railway to be acquired by its donation or fundraising to ensure no cost to the Government. To manage this imposition, the Heidelberg-Eltham Railway Trust was established. To ensure local input into its planning and construction, Mr E. H. Cameron became a member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways in late 1894, which he held until 18th October 1900.

Land acquisition and construction were stopped when the Turner Government refused to empower the Trust to levy a rate. Intervention by Cameron eventually gained parliamentary assent, allowing work to commence and the Trust to reactivate.

An article in “The Argus” in 1911 alleged that land along the trace to Eltham had been compulsorily acquired with little or no compensation for those who hadn’t donated it gratis. Yet another account, alleges that most claims had been settled by the Trust and one landowner had even donated £5,000 towards settling claims. Shillinglaw Farm was one of a number of Eltham properties affected, especially with land lost for the Eltham Railway station.

It took nine years to extend the line the 8.28 miles (13.35 kms) from Heidelberg to Eltham with only one intermediate station at Greensborough. Reportedly, on 20th March 1902, the first steam engine dragging two wagons loaded with men (platelayers), left Greensborough station enroute to Heidelberg watched by a crowd of children and adults. By then, the rails were laid beyond Greensborough, whilst ballasting to stabilise the track, had passed Grace Park (*now Watsonia*). Three months later, the rails, ballasting and stations were all completed to the end of the line.

Both Greensborough and Eltham stations were officially opened on 5th June 1902 at a ceremony in Eltham. Some 12,880 passengers used the Eltham Line the following year. Passenger demand was such that on 1st March 1911, an additional station was opened at Macleod. After ten years of lobbying and construction, the Eltham Line was extended to Hurst’s Bridge, opened on 25th June 1912, then became the Hurstbridge Line on 9th December 1912. Balee and Diamond Creek stations had also opened on 25th June 1912. Balee was renamed Wattle Glen station on 14th August 1922, then later Wattle Glen. Montmorency, Watsonia and Rosanna stations opened in 1923, 1924 and 1927 respectively. Beforehand they were classified as only Flag Stop points.

Footnote: 1. Born in Scotland in 1831, Ewen Hugh Cameron was the Member of the Legislative Assembly for the Electorate of Evelyn from 1st May 1874 until 1st November 1914. He died on 27th September 1915, aged 84 and is buried in the Kangaroo Ground Cemetery with his wife, Agnes.

Sources:- “By Hill and By Dale”- History of the Hurstbridge Line by Marc Fiddian.
Draft Chronology of the Hurstbridge Line, Parliament of Victoria website,
Wikipedia “Melbourne & Hobson Railway Company” and “Railway Stations on Hurstbridge Line”,
EDHS Archival Files and Notes by Harry Gilham.



Ewen Hugh Cameron, MLA
Photograph - Parliament of Victoria Website

Eltham Living and Learning Centre - 50th Anniversary



In 1974 a grant from the Federal Government enabled the Eltham Shire Council to purchase the property at 739 Main Road, Eltham containing an historic house (c1857) and associated farm buildings. This became the Eltham Living and Learning Centre that celebrates it's 50th anniversary this year.

This property was initially part of Josiah Morris Holloway's 'Little Eltham' subdivision. While Holloway went on to become a pioneering land developer who purchased and quickly subdivided large tracts of land in various parts of early Melbourne, his first speculative venture was this Eltham subdivision in the Parish of Nillumbik.

During the mid 1800's land values in the Melbourne area were increasing rapidly as did this allotment as it passed through the hands of several speculators. In 1857 the land was purchased by John Pearson, a tanner, who built the solid brick house that still exists today, though it has been somewhat modified over the years. He also constructed a tannery on the land close to the Diamond Creek but when his venture folded he sold to Benjamin Oliver Wallis, a publican, and it remained in the Wallis family until 1896.

Subsequent owners were Richard Edward Gilsenan from 1899, a teacher at Eltham Primary School then William Scott Matthews from 1923, who lived and operated his business there as a carrier. When Alfred and Claire Fitzpatrick brought the property in the early 1950's the improvements included the original 1857 house as well as a variety of separate out buildings. The Fitzpatrick's owned and further developed the property until 1974 when purchased by the Eltham Shire Council.

The Eltham Living and Learning Centre was originally established to offer a range of activities to cover 'practical skills for living, as well as various hobbies and arts and crafts'. In the 50 years since then the centre has undergone many structural and operational changes while continuing to provide an extensive range of self-help and tutored courses involving hundreds of volunteers. It is now known as the Eltham Living & Learning Hub.

The late Harry Gilham, the immediate past president of our Society, had a long association in various roles with the Eltham Living and Learning Centre from the early days. This article is partly based on his detailed history of the organisation he prepared for the 21st anniversary celebration in 1996.



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

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