

Newsletter

No. 229 August 2016



The Society's 50th Anniversary 2017

Russell Yeoman

In June 1967 a public meeting was held in the Eltham Shire Hall for the purpose of establishing a local historical society. The meeting was the initiative of Councillor Charis Pelling of the Eltham Shire Council and was focussed on the history of the wider shire. The meeting decided that a Shire of Eltham Historical Society should be formed and later that year the first meeting of the new society was held. Charis Pelling was elected as the first President.

Nearly 50 years have passed and there have been many changes to our Society, to Eltham and to the wider world. In particular the Shire of Eltham no longer exists and we are now part of the Shire of Nillumbik. There are nine other historical and heritage groups covering local areas within the shire. Our Society has become the Eltham District Historical Society with a more local focus, but still maintaining an interest in the whole of the former shire.

In 2017 we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Society and it is planned that this will involve a number of events throughout the year. The Committee has set up a sub-committee to recommend on suitable celebrations and input is sought from members on their ideas for appropriate events. Please email your ideas to the Society's email address or contact Jim Connor or Russell Yeoman if you would like to discuss this matter.



The Society has marked past significant anniversaries in a variety of ways. In 1987 the 20th anniversary was seen as a major milestone for the Society and a number of commemorative events were held. These included a dinner at St Margaret's Hall, a display of the Society's collection in the barn of Bruce and Joy Ness at Kangaroo Ground and the unveiling of a plaque at the Society's monument at the Eltham Community Centre. Commemorative wine glasses were produced for this anniversary.

The 25th and 30th anniversaries were celebrated with buffet dinners as part of our July meetings. In 2007 our 40th anniversary was marked by a public meeting in July and a lunch at the Eltham Courthouse.

Our 50th anniversary is worthy of celebrations equal to or exceeding these earlier events and we look forward to enthusiastic participation by members. It should provide a significant opportunity for promotion of the Society and attraction of new members as we go forward into our next 50 years.

Next Meeting

8.00pm Wednesday 10th August 2016

Eltham Senior Citizens' Centre

Library Place, Eltham (Melway Map 21 ref J5)

Heritage Excursion

Maroondah Aqueduct Walk

2.00pm Saturday 3rd September 2016

See further details on page 2

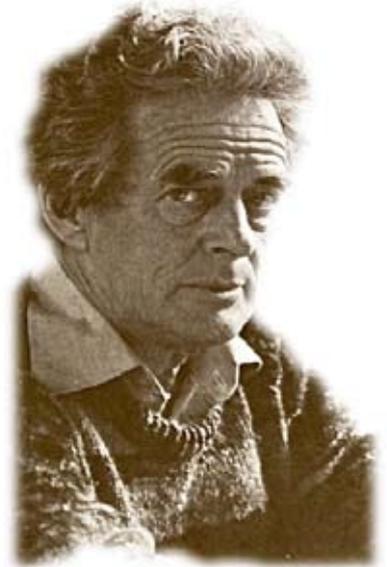
Our Next Meeting - Wednesday 10th August

We can consider ourselves very fortunate to have such a rich local history. So many individuals have contributed to bring us to where we are and what we have today.

At our next meeting Russell Yeoman and Jim Connor will speak about some of these significant 'Creators, Makers and Shakers'.

Some are the Creators, such as the many creative artists who have lived in our area; some are the Makers, those who have helped design and build our places and spaces and then there are the actual Shakers, those who have helped change our world, influence our politics and provide the challenging ideas in the various forms we live with today.

As always, new members and visitors are most welcome to attend this meeting at 8.00pm on Wednesday 10th August 2016 in the Eltham Senior Citizens' Centre, Library Place, Eltham.



Alistair Knox - a 'Maker'

Heritage Excursion - Maroondah Aqueduct Walk - Saturday 3rd September

The Maroondah Aqueduct was once a major link in Melbourne's water supply system. It was built between 1886 and 1891 to transfer water from the Watts River near Healesville to the Preston Reservoir. It was 66 km in length, made up of 41 km of open channel, 10 km of tunnel through hills and 15 km of pipeline across stream valleys known as inverted siphons.

The section of the aqueduct through the Eltham area has been abandoned since the 1980s but the open channel has largely been retained. A recreational path follows the aqueduct reserve.

For our excursion on 3rd September we intend to walk along the section of the aqueduct adjacent to Allendale Road. This is a section not visited on previous excursions and includes the transition from open channel to the inverted siphon across the Diamond Creek valley. Apart from the aqueduct itself the main feature of the walk is the extensive views across Eltham North and Diamond Creek. Along the way we will talk about the history of the aqueduct and the area.



Abandoned siphon pipes beside the pathway through the aqueduct reserve
Photograph by Russell Yeoman

This easy walk is about 3 km return and will take 2 to 2.5 hours. It will start at 2pm at the junction of Allendale Road with Godber Road and Zig Zag Road North, officially Diamond Creek, but on the northern boundary of Eltham. (Melway ref.12 B10).

This free walk is open to the general public as well as Society members. Dogs are not permitted on Society excursions. The phone number for contact on the day is 0409 021 063.

Eltham District's Early History

This is based on an article on Trove from the Eltham and Whittlesea Shires Advertiser - Friday 21 November 1941

The previous part of this article was published on page 1 of our newsletter No.22, April 2016

On May 31, 1912, the boundaries of the Shire were adjusted by cutting off a portion of the east riding which became part of the Shire of Healesville.

Ultimately the Council bought the premises where "The Advertiser" then known as the Evelyn Observer had been printed since 1870, from Mr. R. C. Harris who then owned the paper. Mr. Harris had decided to move his office to Hurstbridge. This, then, was the first real home the Eltham Council had, and it was destroyed by fire on February 8, 1934.

When a special Council meeting was called, it was decided to open a temporary office at the home of the Shire Secretary (Mr. P. J. McMahon) and at the April meeting it was decided to call for tenders for the re-construction of the offices. Eleven tenders were received on May 7, 1934, but none of them were accepted and Councillor Hewitt's motion that further tenders be called lapsed for want of a seconder. At the August meeting in the same year, Councillor Braid moved and Councillor Andrew seconded that the offices be removed to Eltham and this was carried by five votes to four.

Then the quest for suitable premises began and on October 1, 1934 Councillor Braid moved and Councillor J. Ryan seconded that the offer of Mrs. Andrew to lease suitable offices to the Council at Eltham be accepted, was carried. The first meeting of the Council at Eltham seems to have been on December 3, 1934. These premises have been occupied by the Council ever since, but with the passing years and increased Council business it became more and more obvious that more extensive accommodation with better facilities must be provided and ultimately the decision was reached to erect Shire Offices on land on the corner of the Main Road and Arthur Street which had been purchased by the Council for £180 some time ago, for the purpose of erecting Shire Offices.



Eltham Shire Offices and Hall corner of Main Road & Arthur Street
photograph from EDHS collection

Coming Of Age

With the opening of the new hall tonight, the Eltham Public Hall committee is really celebrating its 'coming of age' for it is just about 21 years since the residents formed the committee with the object of raising funds for the erection of a new hall. At that time there were no conveniences at the old hall and there was a considerable debt owing on it. The committee added the annexe and kitchen, and then set about paying off the debt.

Many of the original members of the committee have moved away and others have died, but the committee has continued, despite many set backs and disappointments, until they will now have the satisfaction of knowing that Eltham has a hall of which any district could feel proud.

Although built on Council land, the hall committee is paying for its construction. They have paid £1500 in cash to the Council which has borrowed a further £1000 to complete the work. This £1000 is to be repaid to the Council by instalments of £100 per year for 10 years, after which time the building will be handed over to the Council as a gift from the people.

It is doubtful if such a gesture has ever been made by the residents of any district in Australia.

Trove - <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/57495641>

Back in the 1970s and 1980s can you remember the sound of Bavarian music wafting down the valley to the main road as you approached Research on your Sunday drive to the country. Possibly what you might have heard was the sound coming from the Eltham Barrel of the dance band there.

But to put it into perspective our story goes back much further than that to the birth of an unsung Architect named John Frederick 'Jack' Tipping who was born in Melbourne on 16 August 1923. Jack commenced his architectural career as an articled pupil in January 1940 but, like many young men, he enlisted for war service after having only managed to finish two years of his course. On completion of his service in June 1944 Tipping was discharged as a Corporal having served as a draftsman in a Field Survey Company. Using his war service entitlement under the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Training Scheme he completed his training at the Melbourne Technical College (now RMIT) and qualified and registered as an architect in August 1948.

During the 1950s and 1960s Tipping gained further qualifications and increased his reputation while working for various architectural firms. He also undertook some residential commissions under his own name, including his home in Balwyn North and several other houses in that suburb.

Jack then took on the most ambitious project of his career, the Eltham Barrel. Situated on the slope above the main road it was entered by turning off Main Road at Research. Kalbar Road and Natalie Mews are present day streets in this area.

With the Engineer Des Hill in charge of the project the structure took the form of a giant reclining timber barrel built along the lines of a similar structure in Durkheim, Austria.

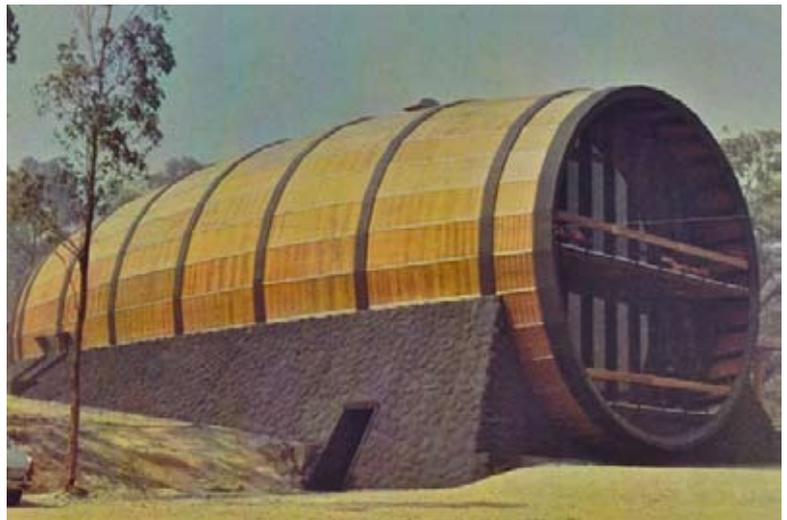
Based on 17 acres of rural land the grounds and building, (comprised of three levels), was commenced in the late 1960s and scheduled to be completed by the end of November 1968.

The structure was built from recycled convict handmade bricks and Oregon timber from the Cliveden Mansion in Jolimont, which was demolished in 1968. According to a now deleted article by Wikipedia it was claimed at the time to be the largest barrel in the world with the capacity to hold 8 million litres of the German beer that was to be sold on site.

With Mr Bill Muller in charge of Swiss/Bavarian entertainment the Eltham Barrel became an instant landmark and a much loved local icon. Many fund raising activities, theatre nights and similar events were held and enjoyed by locals.

Unfortunately, all good things can't last for ever. At 7.44 am on the morning of the 4 June 1989 the now well-known and popular venue came to an end when the siren rang out at the Research CFA. Despite the rain and fog the glow from the fire could be seen at the station. Research Tankers 1 and 2 were the first vehicles on site of the fire followed by the pumper truck from the Eltham Fire Brigade. Entry to the Barrel carpark was gained by cutting the chains on the main gate. Access to the building was then made by cutting through a burning front door with a chainsaw. Further problems were experienced with gas cylinders and lack of water pressure.

(continued on page 5)



Eltham Barrel c1969 - photograph from EDHS collection

The Eltham Barrel

(continued from page 4)

The fire was eventually contained and brought under control. Over the period of the fire 14 CFA and 3 MFB units with 100 fire fighters were in attendance. In addition to brigades there were police, ambulance, SEC, Gas and Fuel, the Arson Squad, the CFA Regional Officer and Shire Building Inspector. Damage to the Barrel and its contents was estimated to be approximately \$2,000,000 and consequently it was considered beyond restoration and was never reopened.

Fortunately, the fire occurred on a Sunday morning as if it had been a Saturday or weeknight the loss of life may have been high as the venue had just commenced operating as a night-club. As it was two Research CFA members needed medical treatment for smoke inhalation and a dislocated knee.

Sadly, the Eltham Barrel proved to be Tipping's last project as he passed away in 1969 shortly after the Barrel was completed. Nowadays Natalie Mews is a quiet residential street with no indication of the areas lively past.

In 2011 two souvenirs were for sale on e-Bay, a mug in January and an ashtray in May. The ashtray has been generously donated to the Eltham District Historical Society by one of our members, Wayne Lascelles.



Souvenir ashtray donated to the Eltham District Historical Society by Wayne Lascelles

Questions still continue to this day as to the cause of the fire and as to whether it was deliberate or accidental, however no charges have ever been laid by police.

References:

Dictionary of Unsung Architects, John F. Tipping (1923-1969)

Wikipedia – Eltham Barrel Restaurant

Against the Odds, Research Rural Fire Brigade (1950 – 2000) Author Mick Woiwod

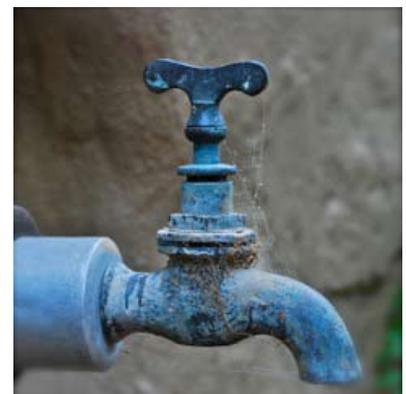
Newspaper Article 'The Sun', Friday 11 October 1968

Eltham Taps Run Dry

From The Argus (Melbourne) newspaper - Friday 28 December 1951

Scores of householders in high-level areas of Eltham were without water for up to 12 hours yesterday. Temporary water failures were also reported from Mc Kinnon and Heidelberg.

Supply was restored in all suburban areas by about 10 pm
At Eltham many house-holders were forced to cart water from lower areas in buckets.



Mrs. A. Knox, of York Street Eltham, said the only water her family had for the day was in a water bag, which she had filled before the taps ran dry at 9 am. Despite the water failures, Mr. F. M. Lee, Board of Works chief water supply engineer, said last night that no water restrictions were likely at present. He said the high section of Eltham was vulnerable to water shortages whenever the city's consumption soared to heat-wave levels.

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/23100194?searchTerm=eltham&searchLimits=>

A Footnote on Shoestring

Following our article about the house in Eltham called 'Shoestring', (page 1 EDHS newsletter No. 228 - June 2016), we received some additional information from Di Hall, who at one time owned the property.

Di indicated that Ron Joyce and his family purchased and lived at 'Shoestring', either immediately after Joy Jobbins, or a little later. Di and Roger Pain purchased the property at auction from Ron and they moved in around March 1972. While living there they commissioned Marcus Skipper to make the wrought iron name sign for 'Shoestring', together with a weather vane.

Using timber purchased when the old coolstore on Fitzsimons Lane, Templestowe was demolished they built an extension, which ran behind the earlier bedroom extension built for the Jobbins. Finally they hired Bob Crumpen, a local carpenter, who completed the inside of the long gallery using rejuvenated jarrah from the coolstore. Di mentioned there was a huge amount of hardwood from the same source that probably still adorns a few of the mud brick homes in the shire.

In about 1977 the Pains moved to a quieter location in Yarra Braes Road, Eltham and eventually put 'Shoestring' up for auction. The purchasers were a young doctor and his wife who were moving into the area and it is thought that Judy and John Dixon were the next owners.

Di and Rodger Pain had Ivan Stranger create a plan for a native garden using many young plants purchased from the Apex Club and later Gordon Ford did some landscaping work there. In those days the block next to 'Shoestring' was also part of their garden.

Membership Subscriptions

Subscriptions for 2016-17 are due on 1st July and we appreciate those members who have already renewed their membership.

As a small not-for-profit organisation we rely on the support of our members and the revenue we receive from memberships and donations. In 2017 we will celebrate our 50th anniversary so this will be a year of appropriately acknowledging this achievement. We would like all members to be able to share this significant milestone.

Our option of 3 year membership has been popular so you may wish to make this choice as it reduces the need to renew each year.



Details of current subscriptions are:

Single member	2016-17	\$25.00	3 year option	\$75.00
Newsletter only	2016-17	\$15.00	3 Year option	\$45.00
Family	2016-17	\$30.00	3 Year option	\$90.00
Business organisation	2016-17	\$30.00	3 Year option	\$90.00

An invoice will soon be sent to all listed members who have not renewed, but your payment would be welcome to David Johns at our August meeting, or sent to the Society's post office box - P.O. Box 137 Eltham.

Yesterday I drove up to St Katherine's Church and cemetery grounds in St. Helena – some years had passed since I last visited. The area around the grounds is known as the Anthony Beale Reserve.

The Beale family were very early settlers of the district. Major Anthony Beale had the church built in memory of his beloved wife Katherine Rose, who died in 1856. The church was completed in 1858 and was known then as 'Rose Chapel.'

I have a special interest in the site. Our daughter was married there in 1995 and in 2002, I made numerous visits to the area in order to complete a horticultural assignment. It is interesting to note how the flora of the grounds has changed over a period of more than a century. A floristic history of the site records that in the second half of the 19th century, plantings by the Beale family included Pines, species of roses, Italian Cypress and a "little foreign Willow" (the two latter trees symbolizing death and mourning).

Photographs of the grounds from the late 19th and early 20th century depict quite large Italian Cypress trees and what appears to be a Willow tree on the eastern side of the chapel. A large Pine is also nearby. Another photo from that period is of the cottage and grounds behind the chapel where Beale's favourite daughter Rose and her husband Herbert lived. Tragically, Rose also died in 1856. An area behind the chapel was originally an orchard. Even today, remnants of vegetation that formed the orchard survive, albeit in poor condition and include Rosaceous fruit trees and a sizeable Olive tree.



St Katherine's Church, St Helena (*before the fire*)
from the Shire of Eltham Pioneers Photograph Collection

A photo from 1930's – 1940's is of a most charming view of the chapel's porch entrance, shaded by a canopy of branches from trees growing on either side. There appears to be dense foliage from shrubbery around the western side of the building. The scene is reminiscent of an old English countryside chapel.

St. Katherine's was almost destroyed by a bushfire in 1957 but the church community had it rebuilt and rededicated in that same year. Some Italian Cypress may have been destroyed at that time. New plantings of the Cypress on the eastern side of the chapel can be seen in photos post-1957 bushfire and they were very obvious in a 1997 Banyule City Council calendar. By 2002 a number of trees had been removed. A large Blackwood (*Acacia*) and Paperbarks which had been considered to have had the potential to cause structural damage to the church and/or graves had gone. No Italian Cypress remained. Most of the shrubbery and spindly Elms on the western side of the church had been removed in a bid to prevent vandalism and for security reasons.

Today, the major trees are on the boundaries of the grounds and include two beautiful Lemon-scented gums (one is listed as a "Significant Tree" by the City of Banyule). Both Eucalypts are estimated by council to be at least 100-120 years old and would have to have been planted as this species is not indigenous. A large Cedar, an Oak tree and a few straggly Elms (which are on the northern boundary) are all that remain. Within the cemetery grounds, a spreading Chinese Elm grows near the southern boundary. These trees would be around 50 or so years old. There are a number of smaller shrubs, particularly on the eastern border including a Callistemon, Oleander, Bay Laurel and Rose species. A small garden has been established near the porch entrance.

St Katherine's Church in St Helena

Taken from an article in the Eltham and Whittlesea Shires Advertiser - 21 November 1941 - obtained from Trove

Of the landmarks in the Eltham district, probably the most noticeable is St Katherine's Church of England at St Helena.

This was erected by Major Anthony Beale and named 'Rose Chapel' after his wife. Major Beale served on the island of St Helena in the employ of the East India Company during the time Napoleon Bonaparte was exiled there.

The chapel was the first place of worship in the district and probably the first burial ground. Many of the pioneer settlers are found in the little graveyard.

Beauty Spots

Taken from an article in the Hurstbridge Advertiser - 20 July 1928 - obtained from Trove

At Eltham Railway Station one notices a board with the Eltham Progress Association's 'Tourist Guide to Beauty Spots'. Not one of the names of the 'beauty spots' is decipherable on the board, which badly needs re-lettering.

For some time agents have been seeking out and securing beauty spots around Eltham, for which there is a good demand and there is every indication that in the near future a substantial increase in settlement will take place. The district is only 12 miles from the G.P.O., has every facility of water and electric current, as well as a frequent bus service to Heidelberg, only four miles away.

...and also

A variety of tasks is available for members at our regular records workshops. They include filing, cataloguing, research projects and even 'housekeeping' of our Local History Centre. It is most pleasing that we are seeing an increasing number of members at these workshops.

Coming dates for records workshops are as follows:

Tuesdays 7.30pm 2nd August 6th September

Mondays 9.30am 15th August 19th September.

Contacts for the Eltham District Historical Society

- Jim Connor, President – Telephone 0418 379 497
- Russell Yeoman, Secretary – Telephone 9439 9717
- David Johns, Treasurer / Membership Secretary – Telephone 9434 3357

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Committee of Management

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