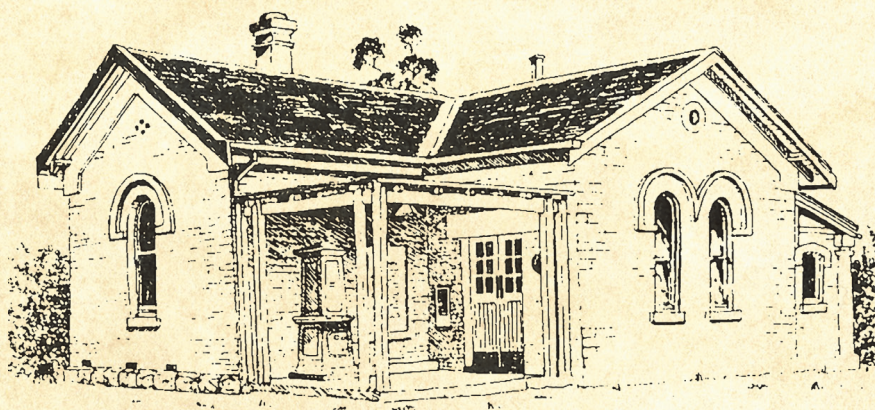


MORNINGTON & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC



Corner Main Street and Esplanade, Mornington 3931

NEWSLETTER

May 2025

Newsletter No. 307



President's Report

I do hope you were able to attend some of the talks held in the Library which were in connection with the mural placed outside the Mornington Shire Offices *HERstory Women of the Mornington Peninsula*. And if you have not seen the mural, can I recommend you do. You have until the 8th June to see the very varied stories of some of the wonderful women who have had a role in developing our community on the Mornington Peninsula.

We had put together stories on a number of other women which were unable to be used. We have covered them in our newsletter but in this edition, we give you Elsie Dorrington - Mornington's first shire councillor and tireless community worker. There would be a hue and cry today if a woman was treated by her fellow councillors as Elsie was. When it was her turn to act as Shire President, the men said the job was not for a woman!!!

For the National Trust's Heritage festival this year, we are joining our fellow History Network groups to put on a display - like we did last year. This time is at Mt. Martha House and you can bring something old you treasure to have it assessed by experts - think Antiques Roadshow. If you haven't been to Mt. Martha House, it is an opportunity to see this lovely old lady and learn of the many and various aspects of its existence. See the details elsewhere. If you can spare two hours on 18th, please contact me on 0403 077 053 so you can be placed on the roster.

Your membership subscriptions are also enclosed with this newsletter, and are due by the 30th June 2025. We value your interest in the society and trust that we continue to organise interesting activities we offer you as members. Can you also spread the word of our service to the community and encourage friends and acquaintances to join - the more the merrier of course. As I said in the last newsletter, it is a good way to keep our minds active by learning new things and then having the pleasure of knowing more about our history.

On the last page, which is our sponsors page, you will see that we have a new sponsor - the Ranelagh Club. We welcome them and thank them for their support. It is a great place for a function with uninterrupted views of our beautiful bay. Again, can I ask that you make use of these businesses the next time you may need their services and tell them that you are from the Historical Society which they sponsor. This would give them feedback as to the value of their sponsorship. Can I give a big thanks Colin Fisher who took on the task of visiting these businesses and more to try to gain support for us.

Diane White

MORNINGTON & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

Dates for Your Diary 2025

Website: www.morningtondistricthistory.org.au

Follow us on Facebook Museum Phone (03) 5976 3203

Visitors warmly welcomed. Why not bring along a friend and introduce them to the Historical Society? The more the merrier. Come and join us.

**Tuesday June 10th,
10.30am - \$10**

COFFEE MORNING

Our annual Treasures morning.

Bring along something you treasure to share its story with us all.

**Tuesday July 8th,
10.30am - \$10**

COFFEE MORNING

St. Mark's Friendship Room
- Cnr. Barkly Street and
Waterloo Place

Speaker to be advised.

**Tuesday August 12th,
10.30am - \$10**

COFFEE MORNING

St. Mark's Friendship Room
- Cnr. Barkly Street and
Waterloo Place

Peter Greer will talk about the Ranelagh Estate and its history. This is its 100th Anniversary this year.

Our Stories: Unearthed

Take part in this one-day event at historic Mount Martha House, part of the 2025 National Trust Australian Heritage Festival.

Uncover hidden treasures – Have your cherished objects professionally valued.

Explore the Past – Browse fascinating displays, exhibits, and heritage films.

Get Creative – Take part in a workshop or meet artists on the lawn.

Taste Tradition – Enjoy Devonshire Tea and live music in the reimagined Mt Martha Coffee Palace.

Discover hidden stories, connect with the Mornington Peninsula's heritage and inspire future preservation.

Sunday 18 May
10am - 3pm
Mount Martha Community House
466 Esplanade, Mount Martha.

Unearthed | AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE FESTIVAL | Positive ageing

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artsandculture.mormpen.vic.gov.au | our arts & culture | MORNINGTON PENINSULA SHIRE

Elsie Dorrington (1903-1995)

Elsie Dorrington's granddaughters Petrina and Rhyll Dorrington are proud to pay homage to our incredible trailblazing grandmother.

Elsie Dorrington was the Mornington Peninsula's first woman councillor at 48.

Facing substantial sexism and resistance, Elsie first hit the local campaign trail in 1951 with handwritten how-to-vote cards for every home in her electorate.

She captured the imagination of voters, delivering each card herself, and went on to win another two elections with a proud record of achievement before defeat in 1958.

As a councillor, Elsie was responsible for the shire's first home-help scheme, championed sporting facilities for women and pushed for the installation of street lights.

Her name is immortalised at Mornington's Elsie Dorrington Reserve after she secured netball facilities there. This honour occurred whilst she was alive; back then usually people had to die before they had something named after them or, they were a man!

During her term in local government, Elsie also secured funds for what was one of the country's first roundabouts in 1956 at the intersection of Barkly Street, Wilsons Road and the Esplanade, Mornington.

However, the matriarch of three children, 10 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren gave much more to her community through her tireless voluntary roles. In the 1930s Elsie was a volunteer at the Lilydale Bush Nursing Hospital and during World War II served as a volunteer at the Veterans' Affairs Department.

At a time when it was much more difficult to do so, Elsie left her unhappy marriage and went back to work managing the Moorakynne Girls Hostel for eight years.

An unwilling retiree from Moorakynne, at 65 she took up a job as a cook at Mornington's Beleura Private Hospital where her daughter-in-law Paula Dorrington worked as a nurse.

In addition to her involvement with dozens of local organisations, Elsie was a Justice of the Peace for 35 years.

Fun fact: Elsie loved to bet on the horse races and only bet on female jockeys!



Elsie's Day
SPECIAL COMMEMORATIVE EDITION • SUNDAY 17 JANUARY 1993 • PRICELESS

At 90 years young, Elsie May Dorrington... this is your life!

By Ann M. Hest (nee Dorrington)

George Francis Hind was born on 12 October 1876. Annie Amelia Pearce was born on 8 December 1882. In 1900 they married and settled in West Brunswick.

On 17 January 1903, they had a daughter whom they named Elsie May - which is what today is all about... 90 years later.

She was a delicate little thing, and not thriving as she should, so a goat was purchased and she was nursed on its milk. (That's why she wears that little Capricorn symbol around her neck!)

With a combination of ancient potions and secret incantations, she pulled through and went on to become the indomitable matriarch we know today.

When Elsie was aged six, her brother Eric George Hind arrived - her own real live doll.

The next milestone was when her father wrote to the First World War in 1916. To help out during these difficult times, Elsie went to work in a ham and beef shop, the forerunner of today's continental delicatessen.

Early 1918 saw her father repatriated from Europe - he was classified as permanently incapacitated, having been subjected to three doses of the deadly and cruel mustard gas as well as being buried alive twice by shells landing nearby.

George's lungs were in a bad state, and medical advice said that the country air would be beneficial, so they bought a small farm, 'Pine Lodge' in McKillop Road, Mt Evelyn. They worked long and hard to make a living from it.

On 15 September 1926, Elsie May gave birth to Douglas George. On 4 December 1927, Joan Mollie was born.

Almost exactly one year later, in early December 1928, fire again threatened their new home when a blaze that probably started in the kitchen, perhaps when the wind blew a curtain onto the slow combustion stove.

Both Doug and Joan were ill with whooping cough. Elsie had put them in their playpen in the kitchen so she could keep an eye on them. She returned to the kitchen after working out the back to find smoke billowing from every opening. Elsie grabbed the two babies and rushed out the back door and around the side of the house to the street.

Neighbours gathered on front and some tried to restrain Elsie as she rushed back inside via the front door. She managed to grab three dining-room chairs before the flames finally drove her back.

The birthday girl on her balcony at The Cottage, Mornington.

In 1928, Elsie May married Clyde Egerton Dorrington and they set up home in a rented house in Mt Evelyn township while Clyde, a master builder, built their first home.

It was during this time that a bushfire roared through the area. Elsie was home by herself (Clyde was working) when the fire roared up the hill towards their home. Elsie showed their cat away and released the books as the danger approached. By some quirk of fate and wind, she and their house were untouched. Clyde arrived home on his bike to find Elsie cleaning up - calm and collected. Next morning, the cat and

Published to celebrate the 90th birthday of Elsie May Dorrington

Who are these people, and why are they honoured in this way?

MORNINGTON PENINSULA Shire

Elsie Dorrington Reserve, 30 Wellington St, Mornington

On Friday 7 December, 1951, a 49-year-old housewife named Mrs. Elsie Dorrington became the Shire of Mornington's first woman Councillor, when six hundred ratepayers decided to break with tradition of no women in the Shire Council. She won a by-election in 1951 by 14 votes, and kept her seat for 7 years, through 3 elections - from 1951 to 1958.

Elsie's family was among the early Mornington settlers.

Cr. Dorrington's first job was to urge the Council to set up a home-help scheme - she achieved this, with Mrs Ann Souter - and she also went on to initiate a number of social welfare schemes in the Shire.

In 1960 Mrs Dorrington was appointed as a Justice of the Peace and sat on the bench at Mornington's Magistrate's Court.

From 1961 to 1969, Mrs Dorrington worked for the Department of Mental Hygiene as the Manager of Moorakynne Girls Hostel in Hawthorn.

Elsie Dorrington passed away on 1 June, 1995 in Mount Eliza.

In 2013 Mornington Peninsula Shire upgraded facilities and the pavilion at Elsie Dorrington Reserve in Mornington. During consultation with architects and contractors, Shire officers discovered that the name of the reserve has never been formally gazetted with VICNAMES. This is possibly due to the length of time the reserve has been referred to Elsie Dorrington Reserve, and procedures for naming features may have been different or not as stringent back then.

First woman councillor

The Argus, 10 Dec. 1951

From the Collection

In our library collection, we have a number of cookery books. Perhaps the most intriguing is Mrs. Beeton's Book Household Management. It was first published in 1861 by her husband's printing business. Various editions have been published since and our copy seems to have been one in the 1920s or earlier. This book was produced for a very Victorian household and covered all manner of living from Daily Duties of all of the household running the establishment, from benevolence and charity to conversation, manners and how the servants should act. Chosen here are a couple of recipes for Invalid Cookery which you may find interesting. Not the usual Beef Tea although that is in there too.

Calf's Foot Blancmange

Ingredients: 1 calfs foot, a quart of milk, 1 egg, sugar, nutmeg and lemon.

Method: An already cooked calf's foot, put it on the fire with the milk to cover with a strip of lemon peel and a piece of nutmeg and sugar to taste. Cook slowly for 3 - 4 hours then strain. While still hot stir in the egg and set into small moulds. There is also baked or stewed calf's foot or a broth recipe.

Eel Broth

Ingredients: 1/2lb. eels, small bunch of sweet herbs including parsley, 1/2 onion, 10 peppercorns, 3 pints of water, 2 cloves, salt and pepper.

Method: After having cleaned and skinned the eel, cut into small pieces and put into pan with other ingredients. Simmer until liquid reduced by half, carefully removing the scum as it rises. Strain through a hair sieve, put in a cool place and when needed take off the fat from the top, warm up as much as required and serve with snippets of toasted bread. This is a very nutritious broth and easily digested.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

A big welcome to Gail Castles.

We welcome Eve to the Mornington & District Historical Society and we hope she has a long and rewarding association with us.

FOR SALE - Please contact the Museum:

FIFTEEN YOUNG MEN

by Paul Kennedy - Published by Penguin Random House \$25

THE WOLFDENE STORY -

The Families and Functions of a Mornington Historic House

by Joy Cullen \$10

A JOURNEY ALONG BALCOMBE CREEK by Winty Calder \$30

READY AND WILLING, WE STRIVE TO SAVE -

The story of the Mornington Fire Brigade 1917-2017

by Colin Fisher \$5

OUR BOYS AT THE FRONT -

from the pages of The Peninsula Post.

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Who were they? By Val Wilson \$15

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WORLD WAR 1 POEMS

Selected from *The Peninsula Post* \$10

REV GEORGE COX - A MAN OF MANY PARTS by Joy Cullen

\$10 per copy plus postage.



DIGITAL NEWSLETTER

We are wondering whether you have given any thought to receiving the Newsletter in digital form via email? The one advantage is that it will be in glorious colour. If you would like to partake of this, could you please email Dawn to let her know dawnfisher@live.com.au

We offer our respect to the First Peoples. The members of the Boon Warrung/Bunurong, past, present and future, the custodians of this land and waters.

Thank you to Chris Crewther MP for printing this newsletter.

Thanks to the Mornington Peninsula Shire for their support.

Mornington & District Historical Society Inc. A00041916W

ABN 7515 1057 105 - PO Box 71 Mornington 3931

Museum: Corner Main Street and Esplanade

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