

A TOUR OF ELTHAM – FROM A CARRUCAN PERSPECTIVE

These notes and photos were collated by Tim Erickson to document the Eltham Tour which was organized as part of the 2005 reunion.

THE ELTHAM CEMETERY

The Eltham Cemetery Trust, established in 1858, selected the existing burial site at Mount Pleasant Road on high ground overlooking the village of Eltham. Trustees appointed from various church and local organizations have administered and maintained the cemetery to this day. The cemetery, set in natural bushland adjoining Montsalvat, is the resting place of Sir William Irvine, a former Premier and Chief justice of Victoria. It also marks the final resting place of many of the early Eltham pioneers including the Carrucan, Coleman and Sweeney families.

It is disappointing that, while the 3 original Carrucan pioneers and their spouses are all buried at Eltham, only 1 gravestone (that of Patrick Carrucan) exists. Like many of the poor farmers of these early times, their graves were not marked with any permanent stone monuments and have deteriorated to become unmarked graves over the years. Discussions have been held with the Eltham Cemetery Trust to pinpoint their final resting places.

Patrick Carrucan (1831 – 1894) and Mary O'Brien (1838 – 1927)

Patrick Carrucan, born in 1831 in Ireland, was the second oldest son of Patrick and Bridget Carrucan. He married Mary O'Brien in Ireland in 1856 before migrating to Australia to join his sister Bridget who had migrated in 1853. Patrick and Mary had 10 children – Bridget, Michael, Susan, Patrick, Thomas, Mary Anne, Catherine, Margaret, Frances and Annie. Patrick died on 6 October 1894 at age 63 and is buried in a family plot in the Catholic section of the Eltham Cemetery. His wife Mary (nee O'Brien) died on 2 Nov 1927 at 90 years of age and is also buried at Eltham.

Patrick's gravestone was in such disrepair that Betty Erickson (nee Carrucan) paid to have a new one erected in the late 1970s. Unfortunately, this gravestone, like the original, only honours Patrick Carrucan and does not record the other family members buried in this family plot. Perhaps this will be rectified in the future.



The resting place of Patrick Carrucan (1831 – 1894)

Peter Carrucan (1837 – 1895) and Hannah Woods (- 1920)

Peter Carrucan, born in 1837, was the fourth child of Patrick and Bridget Carrucan. He came to Australia with his betrothed Hannah Woods in 1858 and joined his older brother and sister in Eltham. Peter and Hannah also had 10 children – Patrick, Hannah, John, Michael, Peter, Francis, Denis, James, Margaret and Agnes.

Peter Carrucan died in November 1895 at 58 years of age and his wife Hannah died in 1920. Both are buried at Eltham and research is continuing to pinpoint their graves.

Bridget Carrucan (1833 – 1901) and John Coleman (1811 – 1886)

Bridget, born in Ireland in 1833, was the third child of Patrick and Bridget Carrucan. In November 1853 she boarded the sailing ship Truro, bound for Melbourne town, a voyage of 86 days. Once in Melbourne, she met and married widower John Coleman at Culla Hill in Eltham. Together they had 7 children – John, Martha, Peter, Benjamin, Bridget, Margaret and George.

John Coleman died in 1886 at 77 years of age and Bridget died on 27 Sept 1901 at 68 years of age. Both are buried at the Eltham Cemetery.

In all 3 cases, the women outlived the men – Mary outlived Patrick by 23 years, Hannah outlived Peter by 25 years and Bridget outlived John by 15 years. This must have shaped the families in some subtle way with these elderly matriarchs providing the living link back to Ireland.

Michael and Mary Carrucan (plot 304)

Michael Carrucan was the oldest son of Patrick and Mary Carrucan. He inherited the Dalton Street farm from his father Patrick and farmed it until his death in 1943. His wife Mary was one of the grand daughters of Thomas Sweeney and married Michael in 1910.



John Francis Carrucan (plot 390)

Jack Carrucan, the grandson of Patrick Carrucan, was the last Eltham based Carrucan. With his death in 1976, the last links to Eltham were broken. Also with his passing, the last Carrucan farming property was broken up and sold.



The Sweeney Plot

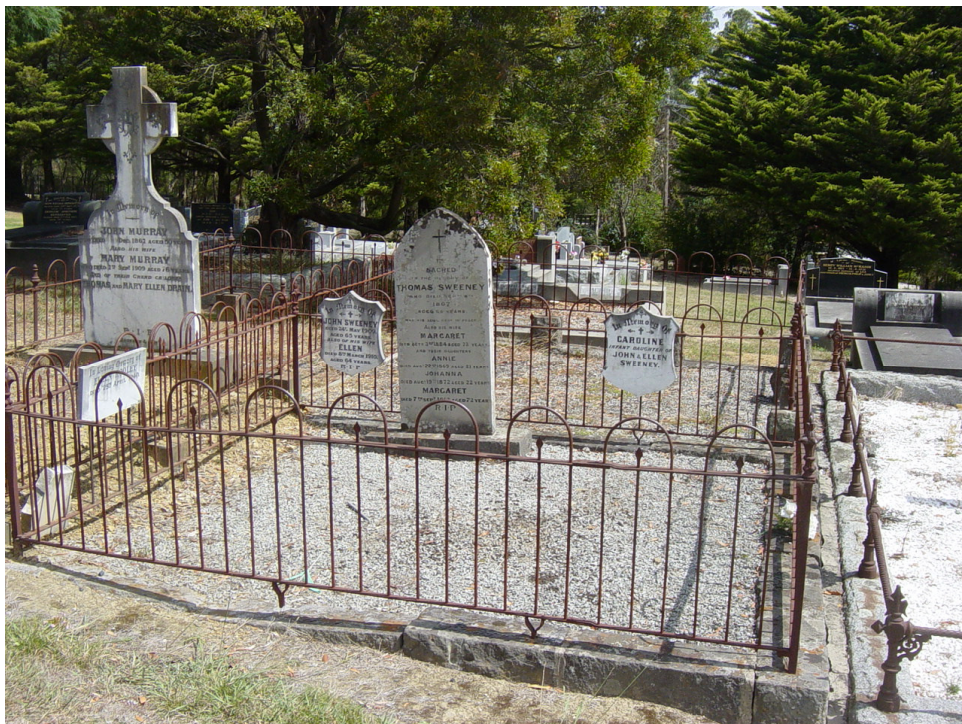
Thomas Sweeney (1803 – 1867) has long been honoured as the pioneer settler of Eltham. Sweeney had in fact been transported to Australia as a convict. On Tuesday March 28, 1823 at the Clonmel Spring Assizes, Michael Connors and Thomas Sweeney were convicted under the Whiteboy Act, 'for a *felonious assault on the house of Patrick Guyder, at Cullohill, and with having set said house onfire.*' The list of sentences states that Michael Connors and Thomas Sweeney, '*for assaulting a habitation, between sun-rise and sun-set*' were to be hanged on the 26th of April. This was commuted to Life Transportation to New South Wales.

A Conditional Pardon was granted to Sweeney on February 15th 1838 and by September of that year he and wife Margaret had arrived in the very new settlement on the Yarra at Port Phillip. Melbourne's population was only a few thousand and many of the buildings were still only temporary shelters.

In April 1842, Sweeney wrote to Superintendent LaTrobe wanting to purchase land on the south bank of the Yarra. In an ironic twist, he subsequently named this Eltham property to 'Culla Hill'. Was this a final laugh at the authorities in Ireland who had condemned him to transportation?

Culla Hill is without a doubt the most historical property in Eltham and the original house still exists in part. The property is in Sweeneys Lane and is still occupied but has been out of Sweeney hands for many years.

Thomas Sweeney died in 1867 at age 64 and is buried with his wife Margaret and various children a family plot.



Thomas Sweeney's Grave

In later years, the Sweeney and the Carrucan families intermarried as did most of the old Catholic farming families of the Eltham District.

CULLA HILL

Culla Hill was the farm of Thomas Sweeney, established in 1842 and a central point of local Eltham life. Mass was regularly held in the front parlour and many marriages were held in its grounds, amongst them that of Bridget Carrucan and John Coleman in 1854.

Culla Hill still stands in Sweeneys Lane in Eltham, along a winding and hilly dirt road. It is easy to imagine the old drays negotiating these rough tracks some 150 years ago. Some of the original 110 acres still exists in its farm form and it is easy to imagine the old farms of the time when looking at it.



Culla Hill as it now looks – still occupied but now on just over 1 hectare of land



A view of the last remnants of the Culla Hill farm with paddocks spreading down towards the Plenty River.

THE ELTHAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (209)

The Eltham Elementary School in Dalton Street (School Number 209) had been started in the 1850s and was just a stone's throw from the Carrucan farms. All the Carrucan children attended and this photo of the 1921 Grade 1 and 2 class shows some 39 children ranging in ages from about 6 to 10. At its peak, 2 teachers had to teach some 100 children ranging in age from 3 to 14 in the old sandstone schoolroom.



The Headmaster's House was build in the 1890s and still stands

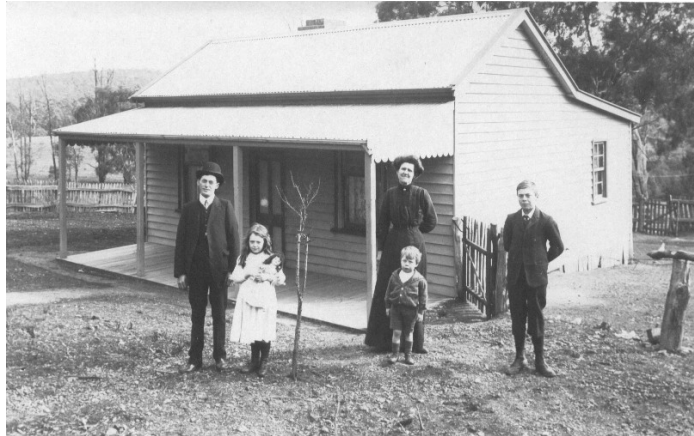


The early schooling was general in nature and focused on rudimentary reading and writing as well as giving the students basic farming capabilities. This photo shows experimental plots which the students maintained.



THE CARRUCAN FARMS

John Coleman's block was on what used to be called Coleman's corner in North Eltham. You travelled some 2-3 km from the Eltham Township towards Research on Main Road until you encountered a sharp corner in the road at the turnoff to Diamond Creek. The Coleman block was on the left side of Main Road. Unfortunately, in subsequent years, roadworks straightened the road and this corner and the house no longer exists. Coleman Crescent is the only reminder to this early pioneering farm.



The Coleman farmhouse in the early 1900s

Fittingly there is still a farm within the grounds of the old farm, namely the Edendale Farm and Community Centre.



Patrick Carrucan's block was in Dalton Street in Eltham. This was not originally a Carrucan farm but was bought by the Carrucans in the 1850's from a farming family called Ball. The old homestead was on the corner of Bible and Dalton Streets and remained intact and occupied until Jack Carrucan died in 1976. The photo below shows Jack in front of the house.



Patrick Carrucan's orchard was part of the Dalton Street farm. The orchard was opposite the where the dairy was subsequently built. You could still see the furrows where the rows of fruit trees had been years before. This was in what we used to call 'the bottom paddock'.

Now the old cyprus tree and the stone retaining wall are the only reminders of the farm.



Peter Carrucan's block was adjacent to the Dalton Street farm. His house stood on the corner of Bible St and Napoleon Street and is still there today. My brother Terry thinks it passed out of family hands a long time ago as he remembers mum saying that it was not in family hands when she was a girl (1920's). Basically from the corner of Bible and Dalton St, go up the Bible Street hill. At the top of the hill is Napoleon St. The house is on the left side of Bible St and the block surrounded it on the left side of Bible St.



Peter Carrucan's farm in 2004.

Our Uncle Jack told the well known family story that old Aunt Bridget at one stage bought some binoculars from a travelling salesman and then proceeded to drive everyone mad by spying on them all from her vantage point in the Peter Carrucan farmhouse at the top of the hill. As this overlooked the surrounding farms (including Patrick Carrucan's) and the Elementary School, no one was safe from her prying eye!

THE AQUADUCT

The local farmers had to supplement their incomes whenever possible, especially during the Great Depression of the late 1880's. At that time the able men travelled far and wide in an effort to bring in extra money. One of the Depression initiatives was the building of the aquaduct that carried water from the Maroondah reservoir through the Eltham and Research areas and ended at Reservoir.



Gang of men including Michael Carrucan putting in the water canal in Research

Now, the aquaduct has largely disappeared and only remnants survive. This section in Allandale Rd (near Zig Zag Road) in North Eltham is one such reminder to the work done by these early pioneers.

